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*MAIDS IN A
MARKET GARDEN*

RICHARD DEHAN

Fulton County

2.



* Jessie E. Norton.

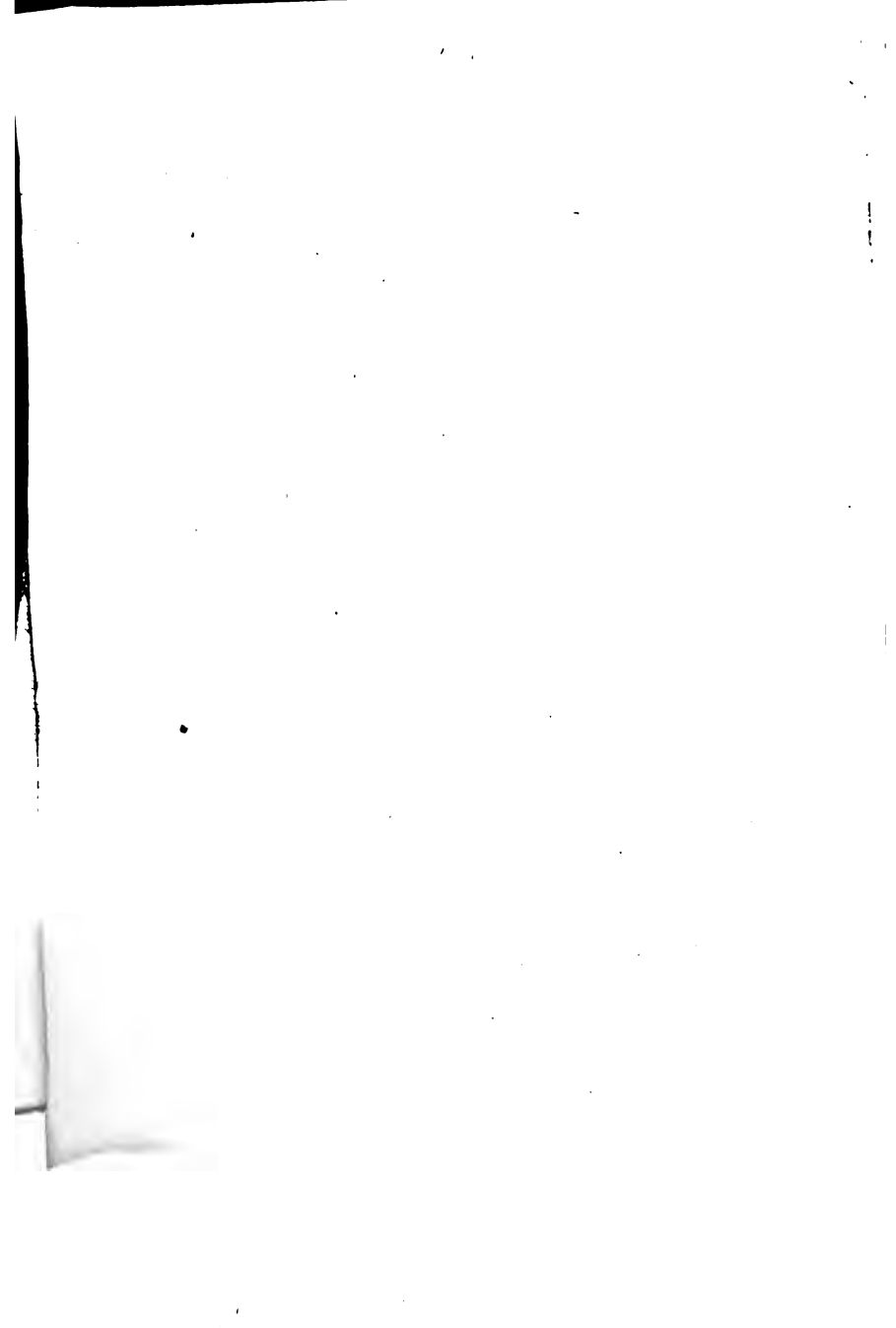
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Graves

NCW



MAIDS IN A MARKET GARDEN

"The secret of the authorship of '**The Dop Doctor**' has at last leaked out. It is whispered that this brilliant novel, which was the success of last year, **was written by Miss CLO. GRAVES.** There were many guesses at the authorship of *The Dop Doctor*, but nobody suspected that it was the work of **this famous lady novelist and dramatist**"

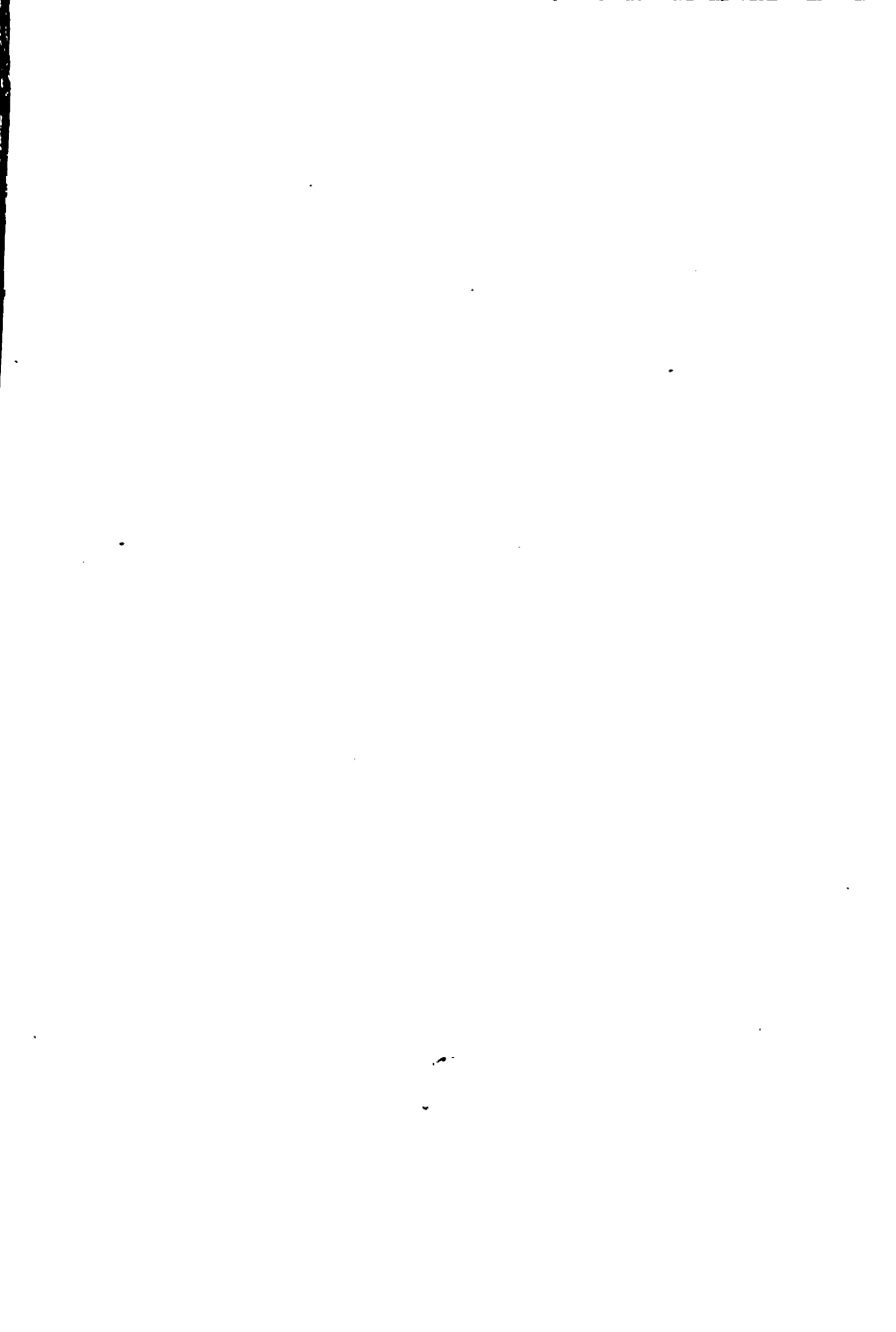
London Opinion

"Whatever she may please to style herself Miss Graves never fails to give us work which is brilliant, powerful, and entirely acceptable."

The Bookseller

"It is a rare thing for an author who has achieved distinction to drop the name to which the public has become accustomed and to replace it by another. But Miss Clothilde Graves having made the greatest success—so far—of her literary career under the pseudonym of '**Richard Dehan**,' is said to have resolved to use the latter name only in connection with all her future work."

The Bookseller





“RICHARD TROTTED DOWN THE LANE.” p 54.

Maids in a Market Garden

BY
CLOTILDE GRAVES
(RICHARD DEHAN)

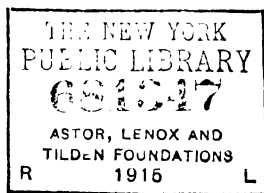
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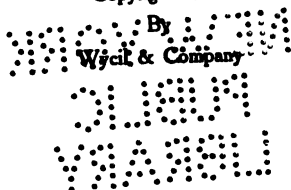
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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

RICHARD TROTTED DOWN THE LANE	<i>Frontispiece</i> <i>Facing p.</i>
LADY JANE PEGRAM SAT AT THE CENTRE TABLE WITH THE		
LEDGER AND DAY-BOOKS OF THE DEFUNCT BUSINESS		
BEFORE HER	8
AUNT HOSANNA JOB	16
A VEHICLE CAME INTO SIGHT	24
"WOULD TH' LADIES BE WANTING ANY FISH, THINKY?"	48
A PILE OF CABBAGES LAY AT THE ANGIENT'S FEET	56
TO EACH YOUNG WOMAN HER OCCUPATION WAS ASSIGNED	64
ROSEVEAR BEGAN TO WALK AWAY BACKWARDS	80
ONE OF THEM CARRIED A PITCHFORK, THE OTHER A BILLET		
OF WOOD	88
OCTAVIA WENT ABOUT WITH A PRUNING-HOOK	96
"HIM BE NOTHING PRIDY TO LOOK AT, FOR SURE"	112
THE KNITTING WOMEN LOOKED UP FROM THEIR WORK	136
"POISE THE LINE SO, BETWEEN YOUR FINGERS"	144
FARMER POLWHEAL	160
ROSEVEAR WETTED THE YOUNG MAN'S PALLID LIPS AND		
TEMPLES WITH THE BRANDY	176
"NAW, LAD, THER' MUN BE NO MORE WALKIN' TOGETHER		
AFTER THIS"	192

ROY W. BO
CLERK
Y. A. 1911

MAIDS IN A MARKET GARDEN

I

IT was a bright, warm afternoon in the month of July. High Street, Kensington, was at its busiest, and although it was neither a Thursday nor a Saturday, the pimply-faced errand boy was putting up the shutters of the United Gentlemen's Work Emporium. Within, the Emporium presented a denuded aspect. If the truth must be told, the business, after dragging on a precarious existence for a period of eighteen months, had somewhat suddenly collapsed, and its promoters were at that moment engaged in winding-up affairs, in the shallow little show parlour on the first-floor front, over a funereal cup of five o'clock tea.

Lady Jane Pegram sat at the centre-table with the ledger and day-books of the defunct business before her. She wore a frowning

Maids in a Market Garden

aspect. The other members of the company were scattered about the room in various attitudes, expressive of different degrees of limp depression, and a plausible person in black silk raiment—the irreproachably respectable lady manageress, under whose auspices the United Gentlewomen's Work Emporium had first opened its shutters : those shutters now sealed for ever upon Kensington High Street—was in the act of taking a final leave.

“ I fear,” she remarked suavely, indicating the volumes over which Lady Jane, with a puzzled brow, was poring, “ that you will find them difficult to understand. You are probably unacquainted with the Rules of Bookkeeping.”

“ Perhaps so,” returned Lady Jane, grimly, “ only I know a muddle when I see one. Good day to you.”

The door opened, and closed behind the departing lady-manageress. Lady Jane drew herself erect and looked round upon the United Gentlewomen assembled. She sniffed a sniff that was pregnant with suspicious meaning, and smote the table smartly with her clenched hand.



"LADY JANE PEGRAM SAT AT THE CENTRE TABLE WITH THE LEDGER AND DAY-BOOKS OF THE DEFUNCT BUSINESS BEFORE HER." p. 8.

Maids in a Market Garden

"Oh, are you really sure, you know?" cried Fanny Dormer. Lady Jane nodded an awful nod.

"Unimpeachable references," she commented. "Experienced in business, and widow of a surgeon with half-a-dozen letters dangling after his name. She has got five to hers—R.O.G.U.E., spells Rogue, and a rogue you are, my sugary friend in black silk."

"If she has cheated us, can't it be brought home to her?" This came from Clara Currey.

"It's not worth while," said Lady Jane, decidedly. "Proceedings are expensive, and, I don't mind being laughed at, but I should hate to be called a dupe. Let her go, with her ill-gotten gains in her pocket. We have got a lesson, in return for our money," Lady Jane prided herself on plain-speaking, "and the best thing we can do is to profit by it."

"And not engage in any more speculations—
Leave to masculine investors, 'bulls' and 'bears,' and
'rings' and 'booms,'
Once more gird our loins for conquests in exclusive
drawing-rooms—
Angling with the latest fashions for the eligiblest
grooms."

Maids in a Market Garden

"O Tennyson, what outrages are committed on thy metre! Heaven forgive you, Rosevear Trelawney!"

"Heaven may, but I cannot—for being a woman born," said Rosevear. She jumped from her chair and drew up her slight figure to its utmost height. Her wonderful yellow-brown eyes gleamed, her red-gold hair caught the London sunset in its lovely meshes and held it fast prisoner. "O why," she went on, "why was I born with a taste for business and a small capital at command—into a world where feminine enterprise seems to spell failure?"

Who has got little here below
Must make that little more,

seems to me an admirable apothegm. Why can't I carry it out? I'm too poor to lead a life of fashionable luxury, and too rich to be a charity orphan. My dear father was a poor Cornish squire, and when he died he had nothing to leave me but a few acres of land and a fund of good spirits."

"Papa—mine and Fanny's—as you all know," said Marjory Dormer sleepily, "holds a distinguished post in the Indian Civil

Maids in a Market Garden

Service. He has a great deal of money, I believe, and an obstinate liver complaint and will one day come home to get rid of both encumbrances. Up to the present he has lavished nothing upon his daughters—except good advice, and bottles of chutnee. We have three hundred a year between us—just enough, as somebody says in Dickens ”—Marjory was too innately lazy to place her quotation more definitively—“ to make us wish there was more. We have an elderly aunt to chaperone us. We live a watering-place and health-resort kind of life, with an occasional London season thrown in. This is the fag-end of one of them. It has been dull.” She yawned, and relapsed into silence.

“ As we are volunteering antecedents and so forth,” said Lady Jane Pegram, “ let me contribute my little quota of information to the general stock. I am the sixth daughter of a Welsh Peer. Papa has no son, brother, nephew, or cousin to succeed him, and as we are all plain and all middle-aged, the title will very likely become completely extinct. It is incredibly old, and the castle—everybody has heard about Llwdllm ; it’s quite a show place—is incredibly tottery ;

Maids in a Market Garden

and the yearly income derived from our ancestral acres of peat-moss and slate-rock has sufficed to support us in aristocratic discomfort and exclusive meagreness up to the present. Of the future"—she shrugged her shoulders—"I cherish doubts. Hence my endeavour—I need hardly say it is disapproved of by the family—to manipulate the small fortune of four hundred pounds which came to me by will of a distant relative of my mother's, so that it might lay the foundation of a provision for my declining years. The idea struck me that a limited company might be formed of spinsters, who, like myself, had got a little money, and would not blench at the idea of a business investment. I looked about me—I was staying in a Cornish country-house at the time the idea occurred to me—and I saw——"

"You saw Me," said Rosevear Trelawney. "You recognised a kindred spirit, and unfolded your plan. I entered into it heart and soul. Then, later on, we met here, in London, and revived the old subject of discussion. About that time Octavia dropped upon us—literally from the Skyes."

"Ah, that crofter business!" commented

Maids in a Market Garden

Lady Jane. "You didn't find the lecturing tour a success, I believe?"

"The tour was triumphant," asserted Octavia. Miss Octavia Wall was a dark, slim young lady, who wore spectacles and short-cropped hair, and always dressed as though she were in expectation of being called upon to take part in a walking-match at the shortest possible notice. "The tour was triumphant. The lectures were received with the deepest attention, and would have made an immense impression had the hardy peasants of those wild latitudes been better acquainted with the English language. Unfortunately, they all spoke Gaelic; and when I alluded to Female Suffrage it was generally understood to mean seed potatoes." She sighed. "Yet a time may come when my poor efforts will be proved not to have been made in vain. Yes, as you say, I joined you. I thirsted for a fresh field of enterprise, no matter how limited; and though the idea of opening an establishment for the sale of ladies' work was not a new one, it seemed a step in the right direction. Three other members, all possessing small capitals"—she nodded at the Dormer girls, and smiled

Maids in a Market Garden

at her friend Clara Currey—"threw those capitals into the company. We opened a business emporium, engaged a superintendent who appeared to have the necessary qualifications"—Lady Jane screwed up her mouth and shook her head—"and announced our readiness to receive (carriage paid) and dispose of (on a small percentage) the articles manufactured by our clients. When they grasped the idea we were literally inundated."

"With banner-screens," interrupted Miss Trelawney.

"And babies' wool boots," added Clara Currey, thoughtfully. "I wonder why gentlewomen—I mean ladies in reduced circumstances, who are forced to maintain themselves by manual labour, invariably fly to banner-screens and babies' boots?"

"You forget the nightdress-bags," put in Fanny Dormer.

"And the tennis aprons," said Marjory.

"And the Christmas cards," added Lady Jane. "In another and higher state of existence we may be permitted to know why they evolve those articles, and what is more, expect to sell them—in the Dog

Maids in a Market Garden

Days. But all questioning is over for the present. We got the right kind of goods at last, and began to establish a decent *clientèle*. Everything promised well, and yet here we are at the year's end out of pocket. Why? Because we were too lazy to put our shoulders to the wheel in earnest, and too snobbish to be real women of business, and take the management of the concern absolutely into our own hands. Next time"—her countenance assumed a look of invincible resolution, and she smote the table, in her favourite way, smartly with her hand—"next time that I have anything to do with a shop I'll stand behind the counter myself and take the money myself; I will, or my name's not Jane Pegram!" she concluded.

"And you are right, Lady Jane!" cried Octavia Wall, with sparkling spectacles.

Lady Jane looked round upon the listeners. The electric spark she had produced had flashed from one to another, and galvanised them to enthusiasm. The chain ended in Rosevear Trelawney, who, in her impulsive way, threw her arms round the bold woman, and hugged her warmly.

"We'll begin again," she cried. "We

Maids in a Market Garden

have got some money left, and we'll begin again. No middle-men, no middlewomen. If we turn pork-sellers we'll kill our own pigs—at least, not quite that," as a shudder convulsed the United Gentlewomen, "but we'll make our own sausages, and sell them by the pound. Or if we become farmers, we'll plough our own wheat; or if we turn market-gardeners, we'll plant our own potatoes and cabbages, and dig them ourselves too. And——" She stopped, and clasped her hands, and looked round upon them all, smitten with a sudden brilliant thought.

"Go on!" the United Gentlewomen cried.

"An idea has come to me," went on Rosevear. "Why shouldn't we turn market-gardeners?"

"Got no land."

"We have got some, Lady Jane, or I have, which is the same thing. Down in Cornwall," she waved her hand westwards, "I have got a farm-house—it is about the only thing I have got—and it stands in six acres of orchard and garden-ground,—it is big enough to hold all of us, without crowding, and as



"AUNT HOSANNA JOB." p. 23.

Maids in a Market Garden

nobody lives in it except a tenant who won't pay me any rent—because I am a woman and he thinks it a waste of money—why shouldn't we turn him out and take up our quarters there? We should be within half a mile of the sea-coast and five miles of a railway-station. It is a land of plenty, lying in a hollow of the great round hills, and running over with clotted cream and thyme-honey. We will take down tools, seeds, everything. We will dig and sow, plant and prune, build greenhouses——” she caught her breath. “We will supply the Plymouth and Truro markets with vegetables and flowers; perhaps, in time, cater for Covent Garden itself. We will become rich.”

“We will!” exclaimed the United Gentlewomen.

They rose to their feet with one accord; their eyes glowed and their cheeks were flushed with suppressed excitement engendered by contemplation of the splendid picture.

“You are a born orator,” said Octavia warmly.

“I only spoke as I felt,” said Rosevear.
“It all flashed on me in a minute. Dear

Maids in a Market Garden

Killigarth! How could I have forgotten it for so long?"

Lady Jane laid her hands on the girl's shoulders and looked into her clear eyes. "My dear," she said, "it was an inspiration. We will form a private Limited Liability Company of Female Fruit and Flower Gardeners. There will be shares—six of them, say, at seventy pounds each."

The motion was unanimously carried.

"You"—she turned again to Rosevear—"you, who contribute house and land, will of course be exempt from purchase. We shall be a rural community of peaceful toilers, eating our home-grown salad in the perspiration of our own brows. I can see it all."

"Let us make one condition—form one resolution—be of one mind upon one subject, though upon others we may amicably agree to differ," said Octavia Wall. "My dears, let us keep the insidious Man as well as the destructive wireworm out of this Eden we propose to inhabit and cultivate. We will coax from the kindly soil the fruits which for countless centuries the Iron Hand of Brute Force" (she was insensibly relapsing into

Maids in a Market Garden

her platform manner) “has wrested from it. No foolish coquetries, no idiotic flirtations” (she looked hard at the Dormer girls) “must disturb the current of our even lives. Regular meals, early hours, sensible dress, hardy occupations should be enforced amongst our rules. And our watchword—borrowed from the labouring class to which we shall henceforth belong—our watchword should be—

“‘NO FOLLOWERS ALLOWED.’”

Miss Wall’s spirited address was received with acclamations. And so the United Gentlewomen’s Work Association perished, and the Limited Liability Company of Female Fruit and Flower Gardeners uprose, like the proverbial Phoenix, from its ashes.

II

AUNT HOSANNA JOB stood on the flagstones outside the back kitchen door one late noon in September, shading her strong blue eyes with her brown right hand, and looking down the steep lane which vanished at its junction with the Pencarrick road, where Killigarth Mill stood, with its lumbering wheel wallowing slowly round and round under the impetus given it by a stream of absurdly tiny proportions. It had been raining, and the autumn splendours of the landscape were enhanced by crystalline sparkles reflected from pendulous drops; and the many-tinted glories of a rainbow, the lower portion of whose arch alone was visible, resting on a heavy stratum of clouds that had formed in the north-east, while where the upper spring of the prismatic ellipse should have been was a clear vacancy of blue sky.

“Th’ weather dog,” said Aunt Hosanna, shaking her head at the broken rainbow,

Maids in a Market Garden

"stands for more' rain. I feel it in my dear bones, too, and Bible prophecies be'nt truer than they rheumatic skwitches. Huey, ma son, run down as far as th' bridge, an' lem ma know whether they pore sawls be fetchin' into zight. Dusta hear, Huey ? "

" Yes, A'nt 'Sanna," said a man's voice from behind her. The tone of the assent was of such preternatural meekness that Aunt Hosanna's suspicions were aroused, she turned round quickly and peered into the semi-obscurity behind her. Then she called sharply. A handsome young man in fisherman's dress made his appearance in the doorway. Over his broad shoulders appeared the face of a young woman. Both the young man and the young woman looked smilingly confused, and on the olive cheek of the latter burned a red, fruit-like stain, the unmistakable mark of a kiss, which must have made up in intensity for what it lacked in noise.

" Ma sweet sensis ! What it es to be young ! ' For all things a time,' zeth wise man Solmin. ' Never time enough to cousey,' answers Nicky Noodle, and Kate Kiss Th' Lads."

Maids in a Market Garden

"Now, A'nt 'Sanna!" murmured Joan Melhuish, deprecatingly, as the garden gate clicked behind the retreating Huey.

A'nt 'Sanna gave a relenting twinkle, and the girl and the woman stood close together, listening as the sound of the fisherman's retreating footsteps died dully on the distance.

"Aw be arl of a zimmer," she pursued, "along of the young mistress's home-coming. Aw've niver set eyes on she since her were so small as——" She dropped her glance meditatively on a wooden washing-trough which had been set in the open air to drain. "Lor' bless her! Aw might ha' putten she to bed en thacky, dolly en aw. Th'ould squire sent she to schule en furran parts, en her wer' but just growed a maid when a' died, poor sawl. Her cost he more than enough money, aw reckon, so that folks did zay as him wer' like the Mayor of Kel-nick, es walked tu miles t' ride one. He leaved she arl him had, ivera pennord, but here her be acomin' back wi' a passel o' feymels t' earn a livin' arter aw. Letter zay zo, dint'un?"

"Th' letter said so," answered Joan.

Maids in a Market Garden

"Fare forth' wi' Fred Full-Pocket, en trapse home agean wi' Penny Liggan. Sich true 'ords as there be en they owd sayin's!" murmured Aunt Hosanna, straining her eyes into the distance. "My dear sensis!" she exclaimed, in shriller accents. "If here they be'nt aw do b'leve! Looky, cheild, and see."

"They are coming," responded Joan Melhuish.

They were coming.

Killigarth House, a rambling one-story edifice of rough grey stone, was perched upon a steep slope of the upper valley, where a shelf of outcropping granitic rock had been hollowed out for its foundations. Its orchard was behind it, and situated upon a rise so abrupt that its mistress was wont to aver that it was possible to sit in an apple tree, and, by looking down the kitchen chimney, assure oneself that dinner was in progress of cooking. Opposite Killigarth, at the lowest level of the valley, where the noisy little trout-stream attained its utmost volume, stood the mill, and the Pencarrick road, taking a north-westerly direction, climbed past it out of the hollow,

Maids in a Market Garden

and lost itself round the high green shoulder of a hill. But the road reappeared again, breathlessly climbing over a very steep ridge to the eastward, many hundreds of feet above the mill, and so exhausted as to have dwindled to a mere ribbon. Further on, it apparently tumbled into a gully and broke its neck, for it appeared no more.

Now, at the point of the road's sudden disappearance, a vehicle—reduced by distance to the size of one of those court-plaster coaches which used to adorn the blushing cheeks, the dimpled chin, or the pearly temples of a belle of the sixteenth century—came into sight. It travelled as slowly as a beetle who has a ball of mud to carry, and is not disposed to hurry himself about getting home. It was full of people, and as it came more fully into sight one of the liliputian passengers appeared to rise and wave a pigmy pocket-handkerchief.

“That'll be Miss Rosevear, I reckon!” commented the interested Aunt Hosanna.

“Ay, sure,” said Joan, “and the luggage butt 'll not be long behind.”

Sure enough, a second moving excrescence appeared in the wake of its forerunner.



"A VEHICLE CAME INTO SIGHT" *p. 24.*

Maids in a Market Garden

"My kind heart!" exclaimed Aunt Hosanna, in great excitement. "If 'em be'n't a goin' to ride straight threw th' weather's eye, I'm no saved sinner!" She pointed eagerly as she spoke, and Joan's glance followed the direction of her finger. The glories of the broken rainbow had been slowly fading, and only the upper portion retained its prismatic loveliness. This, by an ordinary optical delusion of distance, appeared to stand across the downhill road, which the laden vehicles were traversing. In another second, it seemed, the far off travellers must find themselves immersed in a diaphanous bath of rays; purple and orange, pink, blue, and green.

"Well, well!"

"Sure, indeed!" (in different keys of wonderment).

The crawling wagonette had vanished for one moment. Next, its dim outlines were clearly traced through the luminous mist-curtain. Then—the rainbow was gone. "Spliffed like a soap-bibble," as Aunt Hosanna said.

The descent grew more abrupt at this juncture, the wagonette moved more quickly;

Maids in a Market Garden

the lumbering two-wheeled country butt that followed it being left farther and farther behind. Above the hill-ridge a swollen purplish black cloud now hung threateningly. The outlines of rocks and trees grew gradually blurred. The cloud was descending. Suddenly an extraordinary transformation of the wagonette took place. It became a covered van. Aunt Hosanna's countenance, which had expressed bewilderment, cleared intelligently.

"Et be rainin' up to yander," she cried, "'en em's putten up ther umbrellies. An' now th' sun's shinin' agean, brave an' cheery on the way 'at lies afore 'em. Tes for aw th' world like a foretellin'. Hope hangin' before the cheild as her comes back to her ould home, bright wi' aw the colours o' th' rainbow. Sorra then, an' tears a flowin'. And then happiness, steady an' lastin', until th' end!"

III

THEY dismounted from the shabby vehicle—some carefully, some sleepily, some decidedly, some impulsively, according to their several dispositions. They seemed at first sight to be many, although they numbered but six. Rosevear Trelawney was the first to run across the little wooden drawbridge, under which the trout stream ran gurgling. She skimmed up the steep garden path, which Huey Lenine had thoughtfully gravelled with whole slates in anticipation of the great arrival. She threw her young arms round Aunt Hosanna's neck and hugged her, and would have done the like by Joan Melhuish in the exuberance of her heart, had that shy young woman been of a less stately and dignified presence. Then she turned, and after the fashion of Evangelist in the "Pilgrim's Progress," received the weary wanderers one by one as they crossed the river and toiled up the hill.

Maids in a Market Garden

"Dear Octavia," Miss Wall, clad in a serviceable tweed, turned up with leather, and wearing a deerstalker of severely simple aspect, from beneath the brim of which her spectacles scintillated a little less enthusiastically than usual, was the first to arrive after her. "Welcome to Killigarth. This is henceforth to be the scene of our united labours."

"It is a very perpendicular one," replied Octavia. She stood beside Rosevear at the porch door, and looked down upon the agricultural pilgrims as they came painfully climbing up. "I am afraid," she continued, "that until we learn to adapt ourselves to the locality we shall be causing dissension by rolling down upon each other when engaged in our several acts of husbandry. I should like an introduction, dear, to this elderly person who has curtsied so many times."

Rosevear performed the ceremony.

"Ee be kindly welcome, sir," said Aunt Hosanna, accepting Octavia's proffered hand. Then she uttered a sharp cry. "Lawk, Joan cheild, din't 'ee nidge me so sharp. Aw shud a seed the next minnit that the

Maids in a Market Garden

gentleman was a feymell. Aw humbly ask 'ee pardon, sir—ma'am, I mean."

"Don't mention it," said Octavia.

"Aw wun't, sir,—ma'am, I mean," said Aunt Hosanna.

"You are not obliged to address me as ma'am at all, my good soul," explained Octavia. "Feudal deferences and Conservative class-terms are out of place under the present circumstances. I belong, as do the other persons who are coming up the garden path, distinctively and objectively, to the Labouring Classes. I shall be obliged if you will remember it."

"Sartinly, ma'am—sir, I mean," replied Aunt Hosanna.

Meanwhile, Rosevear was greeting Lady Jane Pegram.

"Dear Lady Jane, this is a proud day for me. I receive in my own house—I shall not call it mine from henceforth, but ours—the most progressive woman of her Age."

"At forty-five," replied Lady Jane, whose incisive intelligence was somewhat blunted by ten hours' travelling; "at forty-five a woman is not to be broken down by a wobbly railway journey in a second-class

Maids in a Market Garden

carriage, and a period of crampy confinement in a wet wagonette. Those Dormer girls are mere jellies, compared with me."

They were, indeed, in a pitiable state of limpness.

"Are we really there?" bleated Marjory, sinking down, a mere bundle of veils and waterproofs, on one of the porch benches. "Because if *we are not*, I must stay behind. If we have made up our minds to grow cabbages and things, it doesn't follow that we are to make ourselves wandering Jews!"

"You are so tired, poor thing!" said little Clara Currey, cheerfully, "that you don't know what you are saying. Go to the others, please, Miss Trelawney, don't mind us. Now, Marjory dear, there is a fire inside, and tea is getting ready—and fried ham and eggs, I am sure by the frizzling—and hot cake, I almost think I smell it."

"The cake at Buszard's," sighed Marjory. "I kept dreaming of it in the wagonette, and the jolts regularly woke me up before I had tasted a morsel. It was like the torture of Tantamount in our Heathen Mythology at school." She melted into hysterical tears.

Maids in a Market Garden

"Hoist her up on the other side, Fanny," pleaded Clara. "She is really upset and wants help."

"Let her help herself," replied Fanny, snappishly. "She was born the eldest and ought to show a good example."

"What am I to do?" said poor worried Clara, standing upright and letting her arms fall helplessly by her sides, as Fanny vanished into the house, which had begun to be alive with bustle and confusion.

"Ma'am?"

She started and turned round. A dark figure—unmistakably masculine in outline—was leaning in the doorway.

"Who is it?" she said timidly.

"It's just nobody," said Huey Lenine, "but if I could help 'ee I would be glad." He received Clara's silence as an acceptance of his services, and stooped over Marjory. "Here's a poor wisht thing!" he said in gently compassionate accents. "If 'ee would put her arm on my shoulder, ma'am——?" Clara lifted Marjory's arm and laid it across the rough guernsey. Then, almost without an effort, the man raised Marjory Dormer from the bench.

Maids in a Market Garden

"Now we'm fare bravely," he said.
"Please to go in, ma'am, before."

The opening of the inner door threw a strong light upon his face as he nodded encouragingly at Clara. He held aloof to let her pass in, and then followed, carrying his whimpering burden.

IV

MIDNIGHT found every light that had sparkled from the windows of Killigarth extinguished, and the dwelling possessed, apparently, by the spirit of peaceful sleep. Aunt Hosanna and Joan had retired to their own quarters at the Mill-house, the bedroom accommodation at Killigarth being too limited to admit of their passing the nights beneath its roof. The weary wanderers had eaten heartily—it was only natural they should sleep soundly. But towards the small hours Lady Jane Pegram awoke with a curdling thrill. The keen activity of her mind pierced through the armour of somnolency, as a certain vigilant little sprite who is never far from the bedsides of middle-aged maiden ladies, twitched her by the sleeve of her night-garment and whispered, shrilly, “*Damp sheets!*”

Lady Jane awoke and sat upright. The

Maids in a Market Garden

whisper still hissed in her mental ear. She sprang out of bed and lighted her candle ; she blamed herself severely for not having subjected her bed, before she got into it, to the infallible test invariably applied by her to all strange lairs—the Ordeal of the Looking-Glass. The chamber which the candlelight now revealed was low-ceiled and lattice-windowed. The floor was carpeted with green felt, the woodwork was painted white. Lady Jane shuddered as she descried what appeared to her dazzled vision to be a patch of mould upon the wall-paper in an angle by the chimney.

She held her breath and listened. The regular breathing of undisturbed sleepers sounded through the wooden partition which divided her chamber from that shared by Octavia Wall and Clara Currey. She would not disturb the slumberers without due cause. She would first make sure.

There was no toilet-glass proper, but a little square mirror hung from a nail above the dressing-table. Lady Jane unhooked the mirror, thrust it into her rumpled couch, carefully covered it over, and, regretting that she had not yet unpacked her dressing-

Maids in a Market Garden

gown, sat down upon it, and awaited results. Ten minutes passed, she awakened with a start from an incipient doze and uncovered the looking-glass. She held it to the light—she flattened her agitated features against her own reflection. Surely, surely, a slight but fatal film obscured the glittering surface? Yes? No! Yes!

Then the descendant of a dozen Earls sounded the tocsin in good earnest and roused the house.

The alarm had a wonderfully varying effect upon its inmates, according to their different dispositions. Some sat upright, sleepily, and disputed the infallibility of the wonderful Looking-Glass Test. Others bounded out of bed as smartly as india-rubber mannikins, and reft the sheets therefrom as violently as though they had been suddenly invested with the invidious properties boasted by the shirt of Nessus. Others lay still, protesting that if they were to have rheumatic fever they were to have it—it was written just so in the Book of Fate, and to get up would be a mere straining of the bonds of the Inevitable. But in one way or another, all were thoroughly roused,

Maids in a Market Garden

and Lady Jane, as she retired to the prickly security of her blankets, was warmed and elevated by the conviction that she had done her duty.

V

THAT first breakfast at Killigarth was a memorable one. There were wonderful home-cured rashers, and eggs whose want of loudness as regarded flavour would have failed to satisfy the critical palate of the proverbial London street Arab. There was a mighty bream, flaky, and newly caught, stuffed with bread-crumbs and sweet herbs, and roasted after a cunning recipe on which Aunt Hosanna prided herself. There were loaves new and smoking, and knowing little hot cakes. There were also Cornish cream and honey, and the butter was as golden as if King Midas, of classical memory, had had a finger in putting up the pats.

Rosevear, in her welcome of the previous evening, had made her farewell to airs of proprietorship, and dismantled herself of the dignity of hostess. Lady Jane Pegram was, at Miss Trelawney's suggestion, elected into the place of honour in front of the

Maids in a Market Garden

teapot and the coffee-jug. This last-named article was of the hot-water description, and had suffered chips in the service of the previous occupant of Killigarth. This ill-used person, upon receipt of a lawyer's letter inviting the payment of seven quarters' back-rent due, had chosen to evacuate the premises rather than be untrue to his innate conviction regarding the absolute unfitness of a woman to be entrusted with ready money. Silently, and under the shades of night, he had flitted from Killigarth ; taking with him in the perturbation of his last farewell more than one article of household importance which prominently figured upon his landlady's inventory. But he had not been able to take everything ; he had left the new inmates beds enough to lie on, chairs enough to sit down on, and plates, forks, and tumblers nearly enough to go round ; and for that, as Aunt Hosanna, who had been acquainted with him, said, they ought to be grateful.

To see Lady Jane, in magnificent oblivion of the glories of her pedigree, eating roasted fish with a two-pronged steel fork, was a sight to rouse enthusiasm in the most callous

Maids in a Market Garden

bosom. The alarm of the previous night had been proved without foundation. Aunt Hosanna and Joan were ready to take their Bible oaths that the walls, the mattresses, the blankets, and the sheets were as bone-dry as roaring fires of brushwood heaped up in the wide chimneys and kept constantly replenished could make them. In that respect Killigarth was faultless, and if any member of the Limited Liability Company of Female Fruit and Flower Gardeners had come down there expressly to catch, and die of, rheumatic fever, the chances were ten to one that in the end that person would have to go home alive and disappointed.

The room in which the Limited Liability Company of Female Fruit and Flower Gardeners were assembled at breakfast was the principal room of the house, which made no boast of anything like architectural pretension. It ran nearly the whole length of the ground floor, and opened directly upon a glass porch, the roof of which was covered with the clusters of a vine, which poked its head in familiarly through a hole in the foundation wall, where a brick had been

Maids in a Market Garden

knocked out for its express accommodation. All the woodwork about Killigarth had been painted a brilliant white, and under other conditions the low, heavy-beamed ceilings, massive doors, and high wainscotings would have sucked up the light as sponge absorbs water. At the north end of the long room was a projecting brick chimney, whose capacious throat might have accommodated a corporal and file. The hearth was lined with glazed brown tiles, and upon these stood an old-fashioned fire-basket, in which some logs of apple-wood were merrily blazing. Across the steel dogs which flanked it rested a poker, or rather fire-prong, some five feet long ; in appearance the veritable instrument with which old Gooseberry is represented in missal paintings of the Middle Ages as stirring up the half-done souls writhing upon his demoniac gridiron. A long double-casemented window, whose broad-cushioned seat hinted at future siestas, ran at right angles with the chimney, and at the south end of the room or hall, as it might have been called, a staircase of antique design upsprang to vanish in the mysterious regions

Maids in a Market Garden

above. Opposite the staircase was a door leading into the kitchen, and side by side with this a deep well-cupboard, glass-fronted, and of chastely simple design, exhibited a limited collection of household crockery, both sprigged and willow-patterned.

"I told you," said Fanny Dormer, who fancied that Clara Currey looked on her with coldness, "that there was nothing much the matter with Marjory. She is always either very cheerful or absolutely miserable ; as full of ups and downs as the Switchback Railway."

"When that obliging person in a blue guernsey and sea-boots came in, carrying her in his arms," said Lady Jane, dryly, "I could not imagine what had happened."

Fanny shrieked with unsisterly laughter, and Marjory grew as red as a rose.

"I could not have walked another step, not to have called the Queen my aunt," she asserted. "I was suffering agonies—positively agonies. I had on a pair of new boots, not in the least tight, but what one would call a close fit ; and when that man who drove the wagonette asked us if we would oblige his beast by walking up the hills, I

Maids in a Market Garden

consented as readily as anyone, without the slightest *idea* that the road was going to be uphill from start to finish. Consequently——”

Octavia rapped the table with the end of a fork.

“Infringement of Rule Three !” she cried. “Tight boots do not come under the heading of sensible dress, or I am very much mistaken.”

“I said a close fit, not a tight one,” contradicted Miss Dormer ; “and boots don’t come under the heading of ‘dress’ at all, so there !”

“Did you never hear of dress-boots, goophy ?” exclaimed Fanny, contemptuously.

Marjory’s soft dark eyes began to fill with plaintive tears.

“Don’t peck, Fan,” interposed Rosevear, kindly. “There will be no fine, Marjory, my child, as it is a first fault. But take my advice, and put those boots away until you return to the fashionable world again ; for it were better to enter into the gardening business with one shoe—and that a No. 8—than——”

Maids in a Market Garden

“ Rosevear Trelawney ! ”

“ I beg your pardon, Lady Jane. I had no intention of parodying Scripture. I felt—I really felt as though I had got hold of an unhackneyed quotation.”

Lady Jane withdrew the hereditary glance of the Earls of Llwdllm, and smiled forgivingly as from the kitchen, the door leading to which stood a little ajar, came the sound of clinking crockery and the following dialogue :

“ Well, A’nt ’Sanna, how do ’ee fare ? ”

“ Charmin’, ma son. How’s faether ? ”

“ Brave, thank ’ee.”

“ Pelchards plentiful ? ”

“ Middlin’. We were out wi’ the flood by tew thes mornin’ an’ hauled three thousan’.”

“ Bless th’ Lord !

‘ A might-ee shayt latt down fram Heaven
Wi’ liv-in’ things ful-fill-ed,
Then Pay-ter knawed th’ Lord hed given,
An’ he a-rose en kill-ed,’ ”

sang Aunt Hosanna, shrilly, sweeping the kitchen floor. There was a pause. The listeners exchanged amused glances.

Maids in a Market Garden

"She is a perfect character, is not she?" whispered Lady Jane.

Huey Lenine spoke again.

"Would th' ladies be wanting any fish, thinky? Aw browt a string o' pollock up wi' me, on th' chance."

"Aw'll ask they atter em's had ther breakfasts, ma son. They be at en now, though 'tis midday or nerly."

"Well, well!" ejaculated Huey in a deep bass murmur of surprise.

"'Tis against th' ordnances of God and man, aw dew say. Moreover, aw be cruel clittered to vind out who's mistress, or who beant. 'Tis a pelly-melly o' feymells, arl givin' orders at once, so that like a tud under a harra, aw din't knaw whichee corse to steer."

"'Tis Miss Trelawney's house, sure to certain!"

"Her have turned it into a joint stock comp'ny, her saith. 'Em be arl mis'esses, aw tell 'ee, from the spectacted sheymell dressed i' trouser-cloth down to th' one 'em du call Lady Jane. Her be a nice, dry, sensible body, if, like Nanny Painter's hens, very high upon the legs."

Maids in a Market Garden

“Spltzwddllch !”

Clara Currey had choked over her cup of coffee. Rosevear, with eyes that brimmed over with suppressed mirth, and dancing dimples, rose and softly closed the kitchen door. Lady Jane, with ostentatious composure, asked whether anybody would take another cup of tea. Octavia began to talk very rapidly.

“Domestic life in the Middle Ages,” she said, in her best platform manner, “when the salt-cellar was the only Rubicon that separated the noble from his hireling, and great and small dipped their hands in the same dish, must have conduced to the establishment of a warm Bond of mutual sympathy between the upper and lower classes.”

The ceiling trembled. Joan Melhuish was upstairs making the beds. As she moved about in her thick country shoes, the painted planks galloped upon their supporting joists, and the joists themselves creaked suggestively. Octavia went on :

“Under modern conditions the employer and the employed are as far asunder as inhabitants of different planets. The old state of things, believe me, was the healthier, the

Maids in a Market Garden

nobler, the more natural. The thinner the Barrier that divides us from our humbler fellow-creatures——”

Joan pulled a bed out from against the wall, noisily.

“ From those who, after all, possess feelings, instincts, desires, intentions, in common with ourselves, the better. The wider the chinks in the partition,” Octavia glanced at the boards overhead, “ the more easily——”

She stopped. A hair-pin, a large, coarse, common hair-pin had fallen from above ; it rattled on her plate. Aunt Hosanna’s entry relieved them from the awkward situation. She brought with her a flat brown-paper parcel, tied squarely with pink tape. Attached to this was a key of ponderous size.

“ ‘Tes th’ key o’ th’ front door,” she explained, handing instrument and parcel to Miss Trelawney. Then she proceeded to clear away the breakfast things.

The parcel contained a letter. As Rosevear perused the missive her countenance became expressive of so many conflicting emotions that her companions could hardly restrain their curiosity.

Maids in a Market Garden

"You are right, Lady Jane," she said, after a moment or two, meeting the intuition in that lady's eyes. "This letter comes from Mr. Pengwillian."

"Your defaulting tenant? I guessed as much," exclaimed Lady Jane. "It seems to interest you. May we hear it?"

Rosevear handed her the letter. She read it aloud. It ran as follows:—

"Killigarth, August 20th.

"DEAR MADAM,—It is with surprise that I learn per medium of a letter from the firm of Messrs. Pepper and Co., Solicitors, Lincoln's Inn, London, your determination to employ legal measures for the recovery of £70 6s. 8½d. (seventy pounds six shillings and eight-pence halfpenny), being amount alleged by you to be due for seven quarters' rent of the Killigarth estate, now under occupation by me. The sum demanded by you is a considerable one, and *not to be lightly thrown away*. Rather than pander to the extravagances of a thoughtless and frivolous young lady, I have decided, after earnest self-communing, to vacate the premises. The expenses, &c., of moving will be considerable, but, under the circumstances, I feel that it is my duty to overlook them. As I am leaving the country, all attempt on your part to renew the unwomanly persecution to which you have subjected me will be useless.

"I remain, Madam,

"(more in sorrow than in anger),

"JOHN PENGWILLIAN."

"In the whole course of my experience,"

Maids in a Market Garden

said Lady Jane, emphatically, "I never read such an extraordinary communication."

"It makes one feel as if one were in Looking-glass Land," cried Fanny Dormer. "It is difficult to realise that this injured being really announces in these pathetic sentences his intention of shooting the moon."

"With seventy pounds six and eightpence halfpenny of your money in his pocket," added Marjory.

"I shouldn't have minded that so much if he had left more of the furniture behind him," said Rosevear, ruefully. "However, the letter comes too late to astonish us."

She tossed it into the fire contemptuously.

"We won't let Mr. Pengwillian spoil our morning. See"—she led the way, bare-headed, out of doors, and all the others followed her—"see how the sun is shining, and the hills—the heavenly hills—are all about us. And listen—though they hide the sea from us, one can tell that it is near—one can hear it beating on its jagged headlands, and booming in its hollow caves like a great restless, living thing. Who could be worried, who could be out of sorts, amidst such sights, such sounds as these?"



"WOULD TH' LADIES BE WANTING ANY FISH, THINKY?" p. 44.

Maids in a Market Garden

They stood upon a roughly-gravelled path that ran before the windows of the room they had just left. Behind them was a border of lavender, sweet-williams, and marigolds, that ran gay riot about the stems of the straggling rose-bushes that climbed along the casements. Before them lay an unevenly trimmed lawn of coarse grass, beyond it spread away a wilderness of unkempt garden. The atmosphere was splendidly exhilarating—aerial champagne. The sky was of a burning cloudless blue, the sun shone divinely, pleasant smells saluted their nostrils, and grasshoppers buzzed, and thrushes whistled a pleasant accompaniment.

“My dears,” said Lady Jane, expanding as she drank in the pleasant scene, “we have all the materials here for the making of a perfect Paradise. Get your hats, girls, and let us examine every corner, investigate every possibility of this embryo Eden.” Her tone changed. “Is that person in the distance a retainer attached to the establishment,” she pointed to a bent elderly figure in the immediate perspective, “or a trespasser upon the premises?”

“Let us go down and ask him,” cried

Maids in a Market Garden

Rosevear. "Why, I believe it is Dicky Daisy! Yes, it certainly is Dicky, alive and cutting cabbages. Good morning, Dicky!"

"Marnin'," answered the ancient rustic gruffly, lifting up a preternaturally wrinkled face, a chart which might have served old Time himself to steer by. He straightened himself, leaning upon a patriarchal staff, and peering from under his bushy white brows at the young lady. His long white smock-frock fell nearly to his heels, his hat was a pre-historic felt pudding-basin. Lady Jane was much interested in the appearance of the venerable old man.

A pile of cabbages lay at the ancient's feet.

"For whom are you cutting those cabbages?" asked Miss Trelawney.

Dicky answered surlily, "'Em be fur the 'ould 'oman to home. Mester Pengwillian he gived of 'em to I. 'Dicky,' him zed, "ee can 'ave awl es is 'eer, 'tis my free ungrudgin' gift to 'ee,' zed 'im. Alwis a hoppen 'andid gentleman, Mester Pengwillian!"

"With other people's property," retorted Rosevear, flushing hotly. This last audacity

Maids in a Market Garden

on the part of the defaulting Pengwillian had roused her wrath. "Do not you know, Dicky," she said more gently, "that these cabbages are mine, not Mr. Pengwillian's? —they belong to me and to these ladies, and you cannot carry them away without our permission."

But Dicky had become suddenly deaf.

VI

"My dear," said Lady Jane compassionately, "expostulations are useless. This poor old person is evidently deaf!"

"Dif?" echoed Aunt Hosanna from behind them, in shrill accents of sarcastic indignation. "There's none so dif as 'em as wunt 'eer! Him can 'eer so well as 'ee or me, aw reckon, till when 'im chooses; wicked ould sawl as a' be'eth!"

Dicky Daisy's bleared eye lost its vacuity of expression. He left off cutting cabbages, and with more nimbleness than might have been expected of his years, tucked a singularly fine specimen of the hardy esculent in question under each arm, shouldered bill-hook and staff, and hobbled away. They followed, and overtook him at the back-garden gate. Here stood a pannier-laden donkey of miserable aspect and liliputian proportions. Its bridle was firmly grasped by Joan Melhuish, who stoutly resisted the

Maids in a Market Garden

efforts of the aged marauder to escape with his booty.

"He've got ten gallon o' potatoes besides," she shouted, as Aunt Hosanna appeared upon the scene, "an' French beans, an' the dear knows what all."

"He says that Mr. Pengwillian gave them to him," said Rosevear.

Aunt Hosanna lifted her hands and eyes in scandalised astonishment.

"Ma dear sensis! Who iver heard the like? Yet tes trew as 'm sayth, aw du b'lieve. Th' crater vare to vind er livin' for he and his wife, wi' peddlin' green sauce en garden-trade, en such like; en bein' a little queerish in a's wits en bein' used t' comin' en goo'n about the place, by times, 'm tak'th the 'ords o' that boldacious ould Pengwillian, for gospel trew."

"Tell him," said Rosevear, "that he can keep what he has taken to-day, but he must never dream of helping himself again without permission. We may, if he knocks at the back door, and asks in a proper manner, make him a small present of vegetables occasionally. But he must understand," she spoke with warmth and

Maids in a Market Garden

decision, "that Mr. Pengwillian has nothing further to do with Killigarth, or with us. And that he is a dishonest person, who deserves to be treated with the utmost rigour of the law," she concluded with flashing eyes.

"Lord bless 'ee, my dear," ejaculated Aunt Hosanna, "tes no use sayin' arl thicky tew th' pore sawl! 'Twill be poured in at one ear t' run out threw th' other. We 'm just keep th' gate padlocked, en our eyes oppen. Le' go th' donkey's bri'le, Joan, cheild."

Joan obeyed, and the released Richard clambered up behind his panniers and trotted down the lane, with the ample skirts of his long white smock-frock fluttering behind him.

"And now," said Rosevear, "we will walk over the estate."

VII

THEY explored every corner of the orchard, the home-field, and the paddock. They went over every inch of garden-ground. Not a present advantage, not a practical possibility that the place afforded, escaped the united observation of the Limited Liability Company of Female Fruit and Flower Gardeners. Here a greenhouse was to be erected; there a subterranean cavern of the newest design, was to be excavated, with an eye to the propagation of mushrooms. The sites of cucumber frames and forcing-beds were determined, and a poultry-run projected, in close juxtaposition with a duck-yard, the middle of which was to be occupied by a Roman bath of cement, constantly to be kept filled with water for the benefit of the aforementioned amphibious biped. To each young woman her occupation was assigned, it being absolutely necessary that each member of the Company

Maids in a Market Garden

should assume her own little burden of separate responsibilities, if future clashing was to be avoided. Lady Jane Pegram was unanimously elected to the commanding post of Accountant-General and President of the Poultry-yard.

"We keep poultry at Llwdllm," she said, "outwardly for show, really for use. Indeed, we may be said to support existence mainly upon boiled and roast chicken, for the butcher's visits are," she sighed, "few and far between. The man's ancestors have supplied our family with meat for hundreds of years, and the unpaid bill has become a sort of heirloom; handed down from father to son, and growing larger with each successive generation, but the present representative of the family has lately developed Radical tendencies, which are regrettable for several reasons."

She sighed, and Clara Currey, who was a sensitive and sympathetic little creature, patted her consolingly. Clara and Marjory Dormer were to be associated in the care of the greenhouse.

"I think the work will suit me," said Marjory, reflectively. "I have always



"A PILE OF CABBAGES LAY AT THE ANCIENT'S FEET." p. 50.

Maids in a Market Garden

thought glass-gardeners must have rather a nice time of it. . . . I shall wear gloves, and go about snipping things with scissors, or squirting at them with a syringe, and if there are any ladders to be climbed there will be Clara at hand. She is a dear good-natured little creature ; and not as liable to giddiness as I am."

"Oxford Street and Buszard's being several hundred miles away," hinted Fanny Dormer, "we shall hear less of Marjory's giddinesses."

"They are constitutional, and not bilious," said Marjory, defensively, "but it is useless to expect anything like sympathy from a person of my own family. Sisters seem to rejoice, especially, in saying unpleasant things. By the way, your hair has lost all those gold reflections already. I suppose it is the effect of the climate. People say it is so strong down here ; or perhaps you have made up your mind to let it go back to its natural colour."

"Who is saying unpleasant things now ?" cried Fanny. "Yes, under the present circumstances, my twin"—Marjory and Fanny had come into the world within fifteen

Maids in a Market Garden

minutes of one another—"under the present circumstances, I have made up my mind to abandon all artificial aids to ugliness, and give the good folks of Porthporra the full benefit of my unperoxidized and unpowdered charms. For if we are to do any good down here," said Fanny, fixing Marjory with a glance of unsisterly triumph, "we must rise with the early worm, and go to bed with the bird that breakfasts on him."

"Fanny is right," cried Octavia, to whom the guardianship of the orchard had been assigned, perhaps with a view to the facilities for tree-climbing afforded by her abbreviated skirts and corsetless waist. "Early rising is among the strictest of our rules. Cold pig—if Marjory had ever spent a term at Girton, she would know the meaning of cold pig—is the least of the punishments which will be visited upon the slothful. Laziness is a disease—yes, a disease, which must be drastically dealt with, and will, while I am a member of this community."

Her spectacles gleamed with determination. Marjory felt that her doom was sealed.

"You and I, Fan," said Rosevear Tre-lawney, "are to divide the responsibilities

Maids in a Market Garden

of the flower and vegetable departments between us." She looked about her as Alexander might have looked had a new and unconquered world presented itself before him. "Endless vistas of luxuriant possibilities are sprouting already," she went on, "in my mind's eye. I think, Fanny, that a charge—a small charge, will be necessary, in case of visitors who wish to be shown over the gardens. Our roses, our strawberries, our dahlias, and our wall-fruit are going to be the talk of the county. Yes, a charge will be absolutely necessary. I leave it to you to determine the amount."

"Sixpence?" hazarded Fanny, rather awed by the foreseeing powers of the young prophetess.

"Sixpence! Sixpence for wasting our valuable time on gaping sightseers? Sixpence for ravishing the eyes, delighting the noses, and stimulating the appetites of humanity at large? My dear Fan, admission will be cheap—dirt cheap—at a shilling. The cost of seeds, guano, bass, tan dressing, wood fibre, and other horticultural necessities, will be entirely defrayed by those entrance shillings, remember."

Maids in a Market Garden

“It seems, doesn’t it,” expostulated Fanny, “like counting our——”

Rosevear pounced upon her with staggering swiftness of repartee.

“To count chickens before they are hatched is the absolute duty of a gardener, male or female. Look at the orchard. All those very old apple-trees are going to be cut down for firewood and new ones will be planted in their places. In ten years’ time or so those trees will have reached the perfection of their bearing. What do you say to that?”

“I say,” replied the unabashed Fanny, “that none of us are likely to taste any puddings made of their apples in ten years’ time. We shall all be married and settled ere that epoch arrives. At least, I shall be.”

“Considering the remoteness of the locality, and the determination we have unanimously expressed with regard to the exclusion of persons of the opposite sex from intercourse with our community,” Octavia remarked chillingly, “I should very much like to know how your matrimonial intentions are to be carried out?”

“I’m sorry I can’t inform you,” returned

Maids in a Market Garden

the unblushing one, "as at present I don't know. But I do know this, that things go by contraries. Here have Marjory and I been trying, earnestly and prayerfully trying, to get comfortably settled for the last six years. Six years and fifteen minutes on Marjory's part, as she was born a quarter of an hour before me. Well, we haven't succeeded, and now we're going to flee from the men—not that they've persecuted us much—and take to growing gooseberries, instead of picking them for one another. What will be the result? Why, the one that is inevitable, all the world over. The moment we've begun to hug the idea of celibacy," it was Fanny's turn now to assume the airs of a prophetess, "husbands-elect will come along—in shoals! Octavia may lock the door, but they will clamber down the chimney. I shouldn't wonder," said the audacious girl, "if she wasn't, for all her airs, one of the first to fall a victim."

Octavia's face at this daring flight of imagination on Fanny's part was an interesting study.

"We will not argue with you, Fanny," she said, chillingly. "It is to be regretted

Maids in a Market Garden

that your principles are not more matured, and your protestations based on a more substantial foundation of sincerity. But you are young, and it is to be hoped that time will bring you both ripeness and solidity."

"I hope I shall be gathered before the ripeness gets too pronounced," retorted the irrepressible Fanny, "and as to the solidity, I turn the scale at ten stone now, there is every probability of my becoming a female Daniel Lambert by and by. When I was a little girl at school and didn't want it to rain upon a holiday, I used to make believe that I didn't care—that I rather wanted wet weather than otherwise." She ran away from her scandalised associates when she had reached this part of her speech, and stopped before she had got out of earshot, and finished it defiantly. "Therefore, I hope as earnestly as every one of you that, down here at Killigarth it may never, never, *never*—rain—

'ELIGIBLE YOUNG MEN.'

Then, appalled by her own audacity, she turned and fled.

VIII

"SPLENDID!"

"Grand!"

"Heavenly!"

"If I have a fault to find with Killigarth, it is that it lies in a basin, and the view is too circumscribed. If we had this to look out upon always!" Clara Currey drew a long breath.

"You would soon get tired of it, magnificent as it is. And when the wild nor'-easters blew, and the breakers, some of them over a hundred feet high, were hurling themselves against these jagged, tortured cliffs, you would wish yourself snugly tucked up in the valley again," said Miss Trelawney.

They stood by the ruins of what had once been a tiny chapel, perched on the hill-top, full three hundred feet above Porthporra harbour, and looked down upon the quaint little fishing-village, which lies nestling

Maids in a Market Garden

between the rocky jaws of a yawning fissure in the slaty coast. A light breeze blew from the land, shepherding puffs of white cloud in the blue meadows overhead, the opal sea was streaked with purplish shadows, and dotted here and there with tawny sails. Nets lay drying on the thymy slopes, grasshoppers were whirring, and big brown bees blundering about the heath-bells, and the blue buttons of the corn-flowers. A very old white horse was rolling luxuriously on the extreme edge of the cliff, careless of the fact that an unguarded flourish of the four worn hoofs brandished in the sun might send him toppling over into the greedy jaws of the congers and the big scuttling crabs waiting down in the rock-caves fathoms below.

Nobody spoke much, the spell of the beauty of the scene was upon them, the wild freedom and freshness, the salt sweetness of the breeze they drank in greedily, and sighed when it was time to descend the slippery hillside again.

A faint "holloa" brought them to a standstill. Upon the opposite side of the harbour, where the lime-washed coast-guard



"TO EACH YOUNG WOMAN HER OCCUPATION WAS ASSIGNED." p. 55.

Maids in a Market Garden

hut was perched upon a jutting point of the cliff, a tiny human figure bobbed and capered. It waved a bush about its head and shouted, and answering shouts came from the quays, deserted a few moments ago, now alive with tawny-faced, blue-guernseyed men and active urchins. The very gulls, no longer floating like languid white sea-lilies on the oily green water in the shadows of the quays, shared the general excitement, and swooped to and fro overhead, mewing shrilly and expectantly.

"An accident," hazarded Lady Jane. She lost her balance as she spoke, and sliding with startling rapidity over the edge of a steep slope of sunburnt turf, disappeared from view. The others, following more leisurely, found her sitting in a grassy hollow, with the Llwdllm dignity unshaken, and the Llwdllm ankles as conjectural as ever.

"No, but there might have been," said Rosevear, "if you had not stopped in time. See!" she pointed as the blue-topped masts of a procession of fishing boats moved slowly into sight beyond the weather-stained grey stones of the outermost quay, and the red

Maids in a Market Garden

sails slowly spread their wings to the music of the groaning tackle-blocks, "There will be a race—such a race—in another moment. The man with the bush—the 'huer' they call him—has sighted a school of pilchards, and the drift boats are going out in pursuit. And, by the way, the smartest and foremost of them all belongs to our Joan's sweetheart, Huey Lenine. There he is, half way up the mast, lashing the gaff-top-sail—it is lucky the wind is off shore. Good luck to you, Handsome Huey!—that is the name he goes by in the village. Wave your handkerchief, Clara child, mine has blown over the cliff."

"I would rather not. I have hardly spoken to Mr. Lenine," faltered Clara, "and he—he might think it strange."

They were standing a little apart from the others, watching the dipping flight of the red-brown sails. Rosevear laughed lightly.

"He won't be shocked at your immodesty, I promise you. What does a poor fisher-boy know of the convenances of good society? Though he does look and move like a—like a Spanish hidalgo disguised in a shaggy blue guernsey and sea-boots, when he is

Maids in a Market Garden

lounging among the boats or making love to Joan in the back kitchen. Don't you agree with me ? ”

But Clara answered never a word.

IX

THE days of September moved on apace, in russet and flame-tinted procession. The old order of things at Killigarth was gradually giving place to the new, under the active superintendence of Lady Jane and her associates. The greenhouse, a stately erection, was nearly completed.

The materials had been carted over from Pencarrick, and the builder, a local genius who united in one person the combined trades of mason, carpenter, plumber, and blacksmith, entered with guileless enthusiasm into the ideas of his employers. The fowl-houses at the paddock-end were represented as yet by a turfless desolate expanse of trodden ground, a few posts, some corrugated zinc roofing, and a quantity of wire netting ; but time would bring about the desired result in all its completeness, and practical utility, there was good reason to hope.

A couple of hardy labourers had been

Maids in a Market Garden

employed to dig over every foot of garden-ground. Gooseberry, currant and raspberry bushes were carefully transplanted to suitable quarters, and Rosevear Trelawney and Fanny Dormer, armed with pegs and strings, compasses and other necessary paraphernalia, went about from morning till night in a high fever of ingenuity, planning borders and shaping beds.

One book was in great request among the community at this time. It travelled about under their arms, it was propped up beside their plates at their informal meals. Three copies had already succumbed to active service, the remaining three were much the worse for wear and weather. The volume was entitled : " Hints on Practical Gardening, with Remarks on Bee and Poultry Keeping, and some Advice Relative to the keeping of Domestic Animals. By Maria Mulcher."

And little by little Maria Mulcher had obtained complete ascendancy over the minds of those readers who continually perused her. She became an invisible but potential individuality, commonly referred to by her baptismal name. She ruled by her counsels every action of the household, and scraps

Maids in a Market Garden

of her wisdom and fragments of her aphorisms were continually being quoted and re-quoted, bandied and discussed by the Female Fruit and Flower Gardeners.

“Maria says this,” “Maria says that,” or “What does Maria think?” would be the cry, and her dilapidated covers would be smacked open, and her grimy pages eagerly dived into, and the diver would reappear with some such priceless pearl of counsel as the following :

“SEED SOWING.—Having obtained good seeds, we should be careful how we sow them. There is an old maxim, which in my youth——”

“She must be a hundred years old at least,” Rosevear would cry, “if one may judge from the amount of saplings she has planted, and which afterwards, according to her, ‘have developed into stately trees.’ Take the instance of the Canary Fig, which takes thirty years to attain to a medium size in this country. Well, by her own showing, she has brought up exactly one dozen of Canary Figs. It hardly seems natural!”

Clara Currey would read on very fast.

Maids in a Market Garden

"An old maxim which says, 'Sow thick and thin quick.' This should ever be on the lips of the earnest gardener."

"Then," Rosevear would break out again, "a good many earnest gardeners must die annually of lockjaw. Try to repeat that aphorism quickly, and you will find that it is almost impossible. Maria may be an authority on gardening, but she is sometimes a little unreasonable."

Clara would pursue :

"ARTIFICIAL MANURE.—The question—'What is manure?' may be met by the further interrogation—'What is not manure?'"

Rosevear would shut Maria up and bang her upon the table.

"I could mention dozens of things that aren't. But she only asks these questions out of aggravation."

Lady Jane would take up the tale :

"RAISING VEGETABLES.—If a vegetable garden be properly laid out, well cultivated and cropped, it will be productive of interest"—"Six per cent., at least," Fanny would cry. Lady Jane would rebuke her with a look, and continue :

Maids in a Market Garden

“EDGINGS.—A very effective edging may be obtained by planting a row of parsley outside next the path, and three rows of beet next, and two of Tripoli onions, and——”

“Stop, stop!” Rosevear would cry wildly. “Fanny, my head is going round! How many rows of parsley did we set this morning? Maria is not one to spare labour, and ten to one, if we have exceeded by one row, we shall have to begin all over again!”

“BEDS,”—Lady Jane would resume. “A walk among beds of carrots, onions, parsnips, beet, cauliflower, cabbage, asparagus, celery, etc., intersected with rows of peas, all full of healthful vigour, is calculated to give pleasure to every rightly constituted mind.”

“I should think so. Next year—ah!” with a long-drawn sigh of anticipation.

“SOMETHING ABOUT TOOLS.—Carlyle, in his grimly-humorous way, says: ‘Man is a tool-using animal; without tools he is nothing, with tools he is all.’ The Early Inhabitants of this globe had their flint ball, with a thong to it, such as no brute has, or can have. In gardening, it is impossible to do as much work with a bad tool as a good

Maids in a Market Garden

one. There are many noticeable points about a rake, for instance."

"Maria will have her little joke," Rosevear would comment. "She must be a chirpy sort of old lady. Cannot you picture her, girls? I can, short and stumpy, with a red, weather-beaten smiling old face under a huge gardening hat, trimmed with rusty velvet, a prehistoric ulster, and goloshes—or pattens. Do you not think pattens would be more in Maria's line? Come, it is time we gave her a rest, the old dear. Shut her up, and put her by, and we will go for a walk."

X

ROSEVEAR pioneered these excursions, it is needless to say, and tough scrambles over the cliffs, and sturdy tramps along the narrow, deep-cut Cornish lanes had gone far towards establishing in each member of the community that healthiness of physical constitution, and serene indifference to weather, which should be characteristic of the hardy tiller of the soil. Lady Jane in especial, had developed into a most springy-paced and untiring pedestrian.

“If poor papa were to meet me now, he would be dreadfully shocked,” she used to say. “At Llwdllm, if any of us hinted at using our legs like other people, he would wave his hand, and tell us that there were plenty of carriages at our disposal. And so there are, I suppose, but the youngest vehicle available is a family coach of the pre-Victorian era, and the horses—we have only got two—are so old and infirm that the weekly

Maids in a Market Garden

stagger to church and back again is as much as they can manage. To whom does this charming old place belong? I have a great mind to stop and ask the lodge-keeper!"

Ancient gates of wrought iron work, on either side of which heraldic monsters in lichen-spotted grey stone reared and capered, gave upon an avenue of noble Spanish chestnuts, standing knee-deep in a rich undergrowth of the royal male fern. The machicolated crown of a grand old house, built like the lodge-pillars of worn grey granite, peeped out of a wooded hollow at the end of the perspective. The pheasants whirled up amongst the fern, as the plump brown rabbits scattered across their runs, balmy whiffs of sweetbriar gladdened the nostrils of the Peris who lingered outside this Paradise. Rosevear Trelawney spoke after a pause.

"The person who at present owns this place is a man called Vosper. He is, properly speaking, a Nobody, born of a long line of Nobodies, I believe. But the place itself is old"—she drew a long breath—"and its name is Trelawney. It was my father's rightful inheritance—it should be

Maids in a Market Garden

mine by that right to-day"—she laughed bitterly—"yet, here I stand taking off a proof impression of the family gate upon the family features, and Lady Jane has just asked me to whom the place belongs."

The others looked at the disinherited princess sympathetically.

"Don't look as if you expected to hear a romantic story, Marjory Dormer," said Rosevear, with another laugh. "The history is commonplace enough. My father was an only son, and the estate was not entailed. And when my grandfather wanted to make a match between Dad and a country young lady who had great possessions, but infinitesimal attractions (Dad always said she had a hump), it came out that the poor dear had chosen for himself—that he was already married—and that I, who ought to have been a boy, was about to be launched upon existence. And so it came about that grandfather tore up one will, sent for the lawyer to make another, and between them both, Dad was treated like the infidel Daddy Longlegs in the nursery rhyme. And he was never asked to walk upstairs again, so he bought Killigarth out of the

Maids in a Market Garden

few hundreds he had of his own, and settled down with mother. She was very beautiful, and only a poor clergyman's daughter, and she fretted herself to death over the change in Dad's prospects. Then Dad died after having ruined himself in a mining speculation, and grandfather died leaving everything he possessed to different charities, as uncharitable people always do, and the old place fell into the hands of a Usurper. And that's all."

There was a rustling amongst the fern. A red setter leapt out into the avenue, and in another moment a young man in a shabby velveteen shooting suit, with a well-filled game bag hanging at his back, emerged into view.

His glance fell upon the group assembled outside the gate. He shifted his gun into the hollow of his arm and raised his battered felt hat as he addressed the ladies.

"I—I beg your pardon," he blushed a little as his frank glance encountered the repellent coldness of Rosevear's regard. "Did you—did you wish to see the place? It is not a show day, but you would be welcome if you cared——?"

Maids in a Market Garden

“ We have no wish to trespass upon your courtesy,” Rosevear answered haughtily.

“ Thank you, and—good-morning ! ”

The snubbed young man lifted his shabby hat again, whistled to his dog, and retreated. The Female Fruit and Flower Gardeners trooped silently upon their way.

“ I wonder who—— ? ” Lady Jane was the first to speak.

“ Didn’t you guess ? ” returned Octavia Wall in an undertone. “ That was The Usurper ! ”

XI

THE spirits of the exiled princess partially revived, once Trelawney, with its shadowy avenues, deep ferny glades, and lichened stone escutcheons, had been left behind. The influences of the brisk exercise and cheery sunshine were not to be resisted. Tirelessly she led the little band up and down steep, high-banked lanes, between hedges fringed with fern and foxgloves, ragged robin and white meadowsweet, and garlanded with honeysuckle and purple vetches, or along the poppy-bordered skirt-ing-paths of fields of ripening wheat. The buoyant air quickened their pulses, the sun browned the complexions once so carefully guarded—Marjory Dormer had been the last to abandon that badge of female civilisation—a white veil. The larks were singing one against the other, mere dots of black upon the burning blue, the plump partridges squatting in the furrows cocked

Maids in a Market Garden

bright eyes upon them as they went by, knowing that nothing serious was to be apprehended from petticoated creatures who carried sunshades, and were not attended by keepers and dogs.

It was all very peaceful, very bright and pleasant, but in every bosom—save that of Miss Trelawney, which harboured a bugbear even more objectionable, in the hated image of The Usurper—lurked the haunting fear of cattle. Oxen had looked at them over gates more than once in the course of the day's ramble, red-brown, long-horned creatures, whose pink-dappled nostrils snorted surprise, and whose great black eyes rolled inquiringly in their red orbits as the little procession of London-hatted wayfarers went by. The thought of encountering one of these creatures—irate, clumsily active, thirsting for blood—perhaps, in a narrow lane, or a wide pasture, such as the one they were now traversing, was a chilling one. Lady Jane, mindful of the æsthetic prejudices of the creature she dreaded to encounter, had closed her sunshade, the lining of which was red, and carried it unobtrusively close to her side. Marjory Dormer had _secretly

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“ROSEVEAR BEGAN TO WALK AWAY—BACKWARDS.” p. 83.

Maids in a Market Garden

despoiled her hat of a feather which boasted the same objectionable hue, and thrown it away. What availed these sacrifices for the safety of the community, though, when Miss Trelawney, having gathered a sheaf of the biggest and brightest poppies the wayside might boast, bound it upon the end of the walking-staff which invariably accompanied her in her peregrinations, with a yellow neck-ribbon, and mounted it shoulder-high? The effect—from unprejudiced beholders' point of view—was that of an early Roman military standard, from the other, that of the wrecker's beacon, inviting destruction in its direst form. Nobody remonstrated with Rosevear, though. One of her unusual fits of abstraction had fallen upon her, and she led the van in silence. The field was a large one, crossed by a narrow footpath; the stile they were making for seemed a long way off, while the stile they had left behind appeared even more distant. A lovely view lay unrolled before them, of high hills, golden with gorse, and red with heather, and curving bays outlined against the silvery blueness of the sea.

Maids in a Market Garden

In the foreground, from a crowded hollow rose a ruined tower draped with ivy. Altogether a heavenly view, but how much more to be appreciated from the other side of that far-off stile !

This thought was rippling the otherwise placid surface of Lady Jane's mind, when the heavy thudding gallop she had mentally heard and trembled at so often, smote on her actual ear.

“ Cows ! ”

She had known it even before that hissing whisper chilled her to the marrow. She looked back. Then she screamed, and clutched Marjory. It was Pelion upon Ossa with a vengeance. Rosevear Trelawney looked round, saw the danger that menaced, and stopped short.

“ Go on, go on. Walk as quickly as you can to the stile. Hurry, but don't run,” she said. She tore the flaming bundle of poppies from her stick and threw them from her as she spoke. Lady Jane, Miss Wall, Clara, Fanny, and Marjory were already out of hearing, straining every nerve, with dry lips, and thumping hearts, to reach that distant stile.

Maids in a Market Garden

The bull—for it was a bull—lumbered nearer. Rosevear began to walk away, backwards, keeping her eye—she had, like all of us, read a good deal about the power of the human eye in subduing the emotions of the brute creation—sternly fixed upon the animal. He was a shaggy, thick-set animal, his hide oddly dappled with blotches of red, white, and black, and he held his blunt head, armed with a pair of sharp young horns, down, and made grunting, unpleasant noises as he came along. His red eyes were full of temper, and as he stopped to sniff at Rosevear's abandoned bunch of poppies, he belowed and the hoarse sound set the girl's heart bumping painfully.

XII

"DOESN'T he look mad?" said a gasping little voice behind her.

Rosevear, still maintaining her courtier-like method of retreat, glanced round.

"You should not have come back," she said, with dry lips. "See, the others have reached the stile. Hurry after them, Clara. I can't tell how soon this beast"—her voice broke—"may charge and——"

"I won't leave you," said little Clara, undauntedly, but gaspingly. "I ran away with the others at first; and then, when I looked back, and I saw you, all alone, like a Christian m—martyr in the arena, my blood b—boiled, and I made up my mind to die with you, if there was no other way of g—getting out of it."

The bull bellowed again. He broke into a blundering gallop. Clara screamed.

"Run for the stile, ladies," said a

Maids in a Market Garden

masculine voice imperatively. "Quick, give me that stick."

Rosevear's stick was snatched from her. A young man in a shabby velveteen shooting suit stepped swiftly between the girls and their bovine adversary. In another moment he ran towards the bull, shouting. The bull charged.

"He will be killed—oh, he will be killed!" sobbed Clara.

But no, he was not even hurt. With the coolness of a matador he had stepped aside, just at the right moment, and dealt the bull a heavy blow upon the nose. The astonished beast shook his head, wheeled, and charged again. And then——!

"Well done! Oh, well done!" cried Rosevear. For with marvellous dexterity the young man had hooked the strong crook of the vine stick into the iron ring that pierced the nostrils of the bull. Now he twisted it viciously, and the angry creature bellowed again, and snorted blood and foam. In another moment, utterly cowed, it was in full retreat, and the young man in velveteen returned to the ladies.

"He will not come back again; he has

Maids in a Market Garden

had quite enough for one day. Pray allow me to see you to the stile. You are white—you are trembling. If you would take my arm ? ”

“ We are quite able to take care of ourselves, thank you,” said Rosevear coldly. Then she repented of the ungenerous speech. “ I have not said how grateful we are for your—your bravery ; but——”

“ The bravery was on your side,” said the young fellow, eagerly. “ I—I never saw anything so plucky. And the others ran away and left you—all but this young lady ! ”

“ They considered it expedient that one should be tossed rather than seven, I suppose,” returned Rosevear, lightly. “ And, indeed, it would have been very foolish of them to have stopped. Here we are at the stile. We shall know better next time than to cross it.”

“ Tregeagle—the farm-men christened him Tregeagle because he is such a demon,” said the young man, “ will not be at large after to-day. He will be safely picketed in his own paddock. I am afraid he has spoilt your stick ”—he handed it doubtfully back

Maids in a Market Garden

to Miss Trelawney—"but he has paid for his frolic, at any rate."

"I hope he is not much hurt, poor beast!" broke in the magnanimous Clara.

"I think not. I hope not," said the young man in velveteens. He blushed quite ingenuously; then he added, in a still, small voice: "I have reason to be obliged to Treg-eagle; he did me a very good turn to-day—one that I shall not forget in a hurry."

He ended the sentence abruptly; he saluted Miss Trelawney and her companion, and turned away. Then—he jumped the hedge like a deer, and was gone.

"Why?" exclaimed Clara, stricken by a tardy intuition. "It is the very man who spoke to you this morning—the owner of Trelawney!"

It was, in fact, The Usurper who had spoiled Mr. Treg-eagle's sinister little game at play. And Rosevear had known it from the very beginning.

XIII

THE girls crossed the stile and entered the lane. A sound of heavy galloping footsteps rapidly drawing near brought them both to a halt. In another moment two farm labourers appeared, running. One of them carried a pitchfork, the other a billet of wood.

Miss Trelawney called to them as they went by. Both stopped, fingering their dusty forelocks.

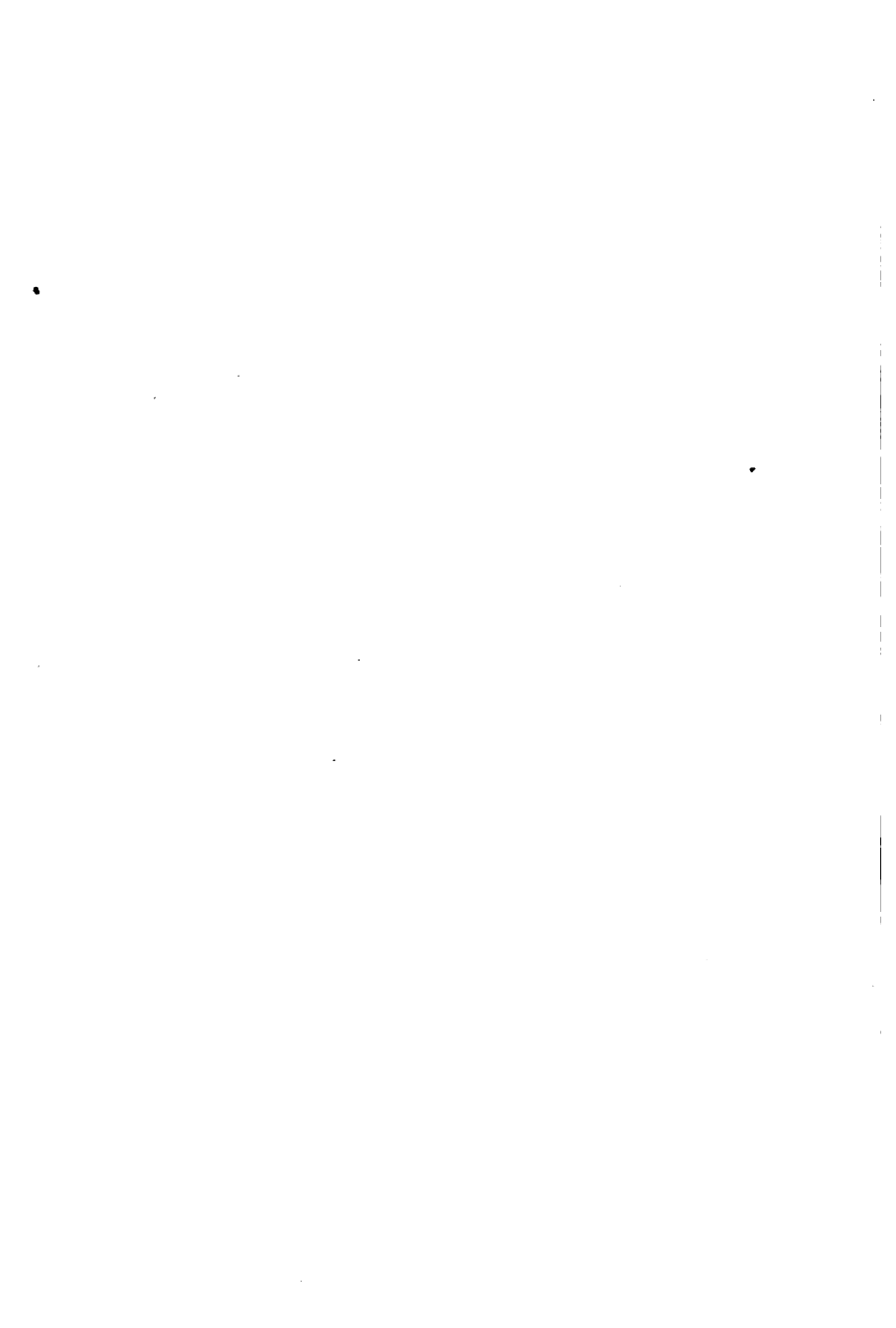
"You have been sent by five ladies to look after two other ladies, who, they told you, were in this field, being gored by Squire Vosper's bull."

"Please 'm, us wer."

"We are the young ladies. As you see, Tregeagle has let us off easily. I am sorry you have been taken from your work. Thank you for coming; and as you have had a hot run, perhaps some cider would not



"ONE OF THEM CARRIED A PITCHFORK, THE OTHER A BILLET
OF WOOD." p. 88.



Maids in a Market Garden

come amiss to you?" Rosevear dropped a shilling into each horny hand.

"No 'm, please 'm, thankee 'm! Th' other ladies, 'em be quite nigh by; sittin' on th' bank by th' roadside an' cryin' terble, one or tew. Wan' 'em, Gerge?"

"Ay, was 'em," assented Gerge.

"We will go and dry their tears." Rosevear caught Clara Currey by the hand. "Run, little one. Kiss me first, though. You were a sweet, brave little soul to come back to me, and I shall never forget it—never! See, there are the Niobides. A pathetic group.

"'By many a good girl wept, Quintilia dies.'

"Only, as it happens, Quintilia has turned up alive and kicking. Ah! they see us. It is fortunate that sudden joy never kills. Here we are you see, Lady Jane."

There was a stampede of surprise among the mourners. Question followed question with breathless rapidity. Lady Jane and the others had not acted heroically in yielding to the primal instinct of self-preservation, but their welcome of the two girls was a sincerely hearty one. Octavia was

Maids in a Market Garden

absent, having discovered and despatched the two labourers to the field of action. She had proceeded to a neighbouring farmhouse in search of bandages, restoratives, and a conveyance for the transport of the wounded home.

“I shall never forgive myself,” she said, when she returned, “Gerge” and his companion, encountered on the way, having informed her of the safety of the objects of her solicitude. “Don’t soften it down, Rosevear. We behaved like cowardly idiots in running away, and I blush for us, especially for myself, who cherish the grand theory of the Equality of the Woman. Woman is Titanesque, where Man is a mere pigmy. Woman advances, step by step, along the road of centuries towards a glorious apotheosis. My dears, nothing in heaven or on earth, or out of—elsewhere, will stop her progress along that road, unless”—Octavia shook her head—“unless she meets a bull upon it, or a blackbeetle.”

“These are the weak joints in her otherwise impregnable harness. But this is a curious place. That picturesque group of trees—four of them, and each of a different

Maids in a Market Garden

kind—overshadowing what appears to be an antique well——”

“ ‘ A well there is in the West Countrie,
And a clearer one never was seen ;
There is not a wife in the West Countrie
But has heard of the Well of St. Keyne !

An oak and an elm tree stand beside,
And behind doth an ash-tree grow,
And a willow from the bank above
Droops in the water below,’ ”

sang Rosevear.

“ Though the willow has disappeared with time, I suppose, without destroying the magic properties of the waters, ‘ The sweetness of domestic sovereignty,’ said St. Keyne, ‘ shall belong to that one of a married couple who shall first drink thereof.’ ”

“ Then this is really St. Keyne’s Well ? ”
said Fanny Dormer, eagerly.

“ Assuredly.”

They approached the ruined well, and examined it in silence. Its front was of pointed form, with a rude entrance some four feet high. It was spanned above by a single flat stone, which led into a grotto, whose arched roof was draped with lovely fronds of hart’s-tongue fern, and curtains of

Maids in a Market Garden

velvety-green moss. The granite basin was brimmed with clear water, which gurgled away through some subterranean outlet with a pleasant sound.

"The water is only supposed to produce an effect upon married drinkers, I suppose?" hazarded Fanny.

"Tradition sayeth not. Come, Octavia, pledge me a bumper to the supremacy of Woman, and the—what is it? The speedy downfall of the Era of Brute Force. I intended this as a surprise, and have got a travelling cup in my pocket."

"Since we have decided that Man is to play no part in our present drama of individual energy and collative enterprise," Octavia objected—"it seems like an infringement of the Rules——"

"Nonsense," cried Fanny. "We know what we are, but we know not what we may be. Let us make sure, at least, that if ever any of us fall victims to the yoke of marriage," she laughed, "we shall not, at least, be ground under the Iron Hoof of the Oppressor, as are so many of our hopeless sisters." The daring girl quoted from one of Octavia's own speeches: "Let us make

Maids in a Market Garden

sure that the grinding is going to be on the right side. Come!" She took the travelling cup from Rosevear, and filled it to the brim, and held it to the lips of Lady Jane. "Liberty—the Latch-key—and the Last Word in all squabbles! Hurrah!"

Lady Jane obeyed, and drank. And though the travelling cup was one of those wonderful patent collapsible affairs which invariably collapse at the wrong moment, and empty their contents into the drinker's sleeve—it ended in everybody's having a sip of the wonderful water of St. Keyne's Well.

XIV

It was astonishing how many of the orchard-trees proved, upon judicial examination, to be past work. Octavia went about with a pruning hook, an instrument which her past surgical experience made her very handy at using, and chopped away dead wood from likely cases, and condemned hopeless ones with a cross-slash on the bark, and was very busy indeed. The axes of the hired labourers were continually employed, and the wood-house was literally bursting with fuel.

But one afternoon, when Miss Wall failed to respond to the summons of the lunch-bell, little Clara Currey, who had run out to call her, found her sitting on a felled trunk, very pale.

"What is the matter? You haven't cut yourself?" inquired Clara, anxiously. Then she came nearer, and turned very pale.

Maids in a Market Garden

"You are hurt—you are bleeding dreadfully," she cried. "What—oh, what—can I do?"

"First of all, don't faint," said Octavia. "Next, lend me your handkerchief. Help me to tie it tight above the cut, and get me a stick; I must try and improvise a tourniquet, and then you can help me back to the house."

She had chopped her arm very severely with her own billhook. In spite of all their united endeavours the bleeding would not stop. Octavia was of opinion that an artery had been severed.

"If the accident had only happened to somebody else," she said, "I should have been able to do all that was necessary. As it is I am handicapped." Then, with great resolution, she managed to stagger back to the house, leaning on Clara.

The entry was an effective one.

"When the blood bolter'd Banquo smiled upon them," and feebly demanded brandy, cobwebs, and court-plaster, the consternation of the Limited Liability Company of F.F. and F.G.'s was complete. Many invaluable suggestions were made, many infallible recipes for stopping the effusion were

Maids in a Market Garden

put in practice, but none were of any avail. The situation began to look serious.

“And there is not such a thing as a doctor nearer than five miles away!” gasped Fanny Dormer.

“We must send.” Rosevear looked up from her task. With her thumbs firmly pressed upon the edges of the wound, she was holding it firmly together. “Call Aunt Hosanna, I dare not let go for a moment.”

Aunt Hosanna came, took in the situation at a glance, and ran out of the room. She returned a moment later.

“Joan sh’ ’ave goned for he, down tew th’ village. Her can run like a corn-crick when her like tu. An my dears, tes a bad job, deed en so, but ’twould ha’ bin’ worse if him hed bin out a fishin’. But tes a did calm, and arl th’ boats be in ’abber, thank th’ Lord!” she concluded, piously.

“Of whom do you speak?” asked the agitated Lady Jane. “If the doctor happens to be in the village, it is indeed a providence——”

“Th’ doctor!” echoed Aunt Hosanna, contemptuously. “When folks down tew here be did, em dew send for th’ doctor



"OCTAVIA WENT ABOUT WITH A PRUNING-HOOK." / 94.

Maids in a Market Garden

to tell 'em what 'em died on, an' charge 'em haaf a crown for th' opinion and th' certificate throwed in. But i' cases o' suddin sickness or lewsin o' blid ther be our own folk—'em as hes the gift o' yerbs, an' th' gift o' layin' on o' hands, an' sich——”

“Good heavens! does she mean to say that Joan has gone for some village quack instead of——? Quick, Fanny—somebody! Run to the telegraph office! Wire to Pencarrick for the doctor!”

Fanny dashed from the room as Joan re-entered, breathless and crimson. With her was Huey Lenine. The sunbeams pouring through the long casements illuminated a strange tableau. Octavia, ghastly pale and crimson-stained, for the central figure; Rosevear Trelawney and Clara Currey supporting her, little less pale, certainly as incarnadined as the patient—the anxious faces surrounding, and towering above all the broad shoulders, yellow curls, and grave blue eyes of the sunburnt young fisherman; Joan's massive outlines and olive-tints completing the picture.

“Mr. Lenine—Huey, can you help us, really?” said Rosevear, in desperate anxiety.

Maids in a Market Garden

"She is bleeding terribly ; she is getting weaker every moment, and the doctor—Heaven only knows when he will come ! "

Huey Lenine came forward, cap in hand. He was not awkward, but gravely self-possessed.

"If he can do anything let him try," muttered Octavia. "This can't go on much longer."

The grave young fisherman nodded, meeting the consent in her eyes. He strode nearer, and dropped lightly on one knee beside her.

XV

"WID 'ee please to look maw straight i' th' eyes, ma'am," Huey Lenine said briefly. "As straight as may be. Please none to speak."

Octavia, white-lipped and hollow-eyed from exhaustion, fixed her eyes somewhat doubtfully on the grave blue ones of the young fisherman. Clara Currey, who had taken Rosevear's place, raised her soft brown glance to his, shyly and trustingly. She held the lips of the gaping wound pressed together, as Rosevear had done, but the red drops crept between the small white fingers relentlessly, one by one, and splashed upon the oaken planks, carrying Octavia's strength with them.

Huey laid one brown hand upon both Clara's and held the other outspread, a few inches above. Then he began to recite, or rather intone, in an odd, pleasant sing-

Maids in a Market Garden

song, a doggerel kind of rhyme, in much barbarised Latin—

Zanguis mane in tay
Ziccut Christus fuit in zay :
Zanguis mane in tuâ vendâ
Ziccut Christus in suâ pendâ
Zanguis mane vixus
Ziccut Christus quando crucifixus.

The invocation which followed brought the rude ceremony to an end. The voice ceased, but the room yet vibrated with its sound, as a belfry re-echoes with the humming of a great bell that has been stricken. Octavia's head fell back on Clara's shoulder as Huey Lenine rose to his feet. But the flow of blood had stopped. Huey nodded, his white teeth gleamed in a satisfied smile. He saluted the ladies with a sudden accession of sheepish shyness, and strode out of the room, Joan and Aunt Hosanna following at his heels.

Later on the doctor came, a bright-eyed, lively little man, with a broad, loud accent and a considerable amount of skill. He sewed up the gash, and enveloped it in strictly professional bandages, and expressed no surprise on being told what Huey had effected.

“ It's not the first time I have come across

Maids in a Market Garden

the young fellow," he said. "He comes of a decent family enough—the son of old 'Zekiel Lenine, down to Porthporra. Whatever the 'gift,' as they call it, may be, it runs in the family. 'Zekiel was a great blood charmer in his day, and so was his grandfather before him. Yes, yes, there are more things known in a Cornish village, especially with regard to the art of healing, than are dreamt of in the philosophy of the people who write medical works. Some of the old women, a'nts as they call 'em, can do more with a handful of what they call 'yarribs' than I can with the College of Surgeons and Apothecaries' Hall at my back. Your friend will do well enough now, my lady." Lady Jane's honourable prefix rolled like a sugar-plum over his tongue. "As to my fee, it is three and sixpence, without counting the journey over, which—thank you!—although I keep my own gig, involves an expenditure of at least eighteenpennyworth of horse-flesh. I had a colleague here some years ago, but the place didn't agree with him and his family—it was too healthy. Thank you again, my lady. Good morning."

The garrulous little doctor climbed into

Maids in a Market Garden

his gig with Huey's assistance—he was as short and plump as the vehicle was high and spidery—and drove away.

“I have made up my mind,” said Lady Jane, following him down the road with her eye. “We must have one.”

“A doctor? Resident on the premises?” said Fanny, in shrill surprise.

“I did not say a doctor; I meant a horse and trap.”

“Glorious idea! The thing of all things that would make me perfectly happy,” cried Marjory. “A neat little red-wheeled dog-cart with a cob, a shiny cob, in bronze Lakeham harness—and a boy in buttons, cords and tops to sit behind?” Marjory clapped her hands.

Lady Jane dealt her a rebuking glance. “Extremely nice, as you say, but hardly the thing for our purposes. The hampers of fruit, the crates of vegetables, the boxes of eggs, are they to be conveyed to the railway in your red-wheeled dog-cart? If so, the boy in buttons and cords will have to sit on top of them, or run behind. My child, you forget that we are market-gardeners, *pur et simple*, and that shiny cobs

Maids in a Market Garden

in Lakeham harness belong to the social status we have abandoned. Our horse must be a serviceable animal who knows what ploughing means, and has no objection to make himself useful in drawing loads of gravel or manure. A market cart, or a light wagon with a movable canvas tilt, with a plank seat, upon which the driver may sit——”

“With legs dangling over the beast’s tail! I would rather die,” cried Marjory, “than undergo such degradation. Fancy if the Platt-Hennikers and the Brown-Gingalls and Lady Betts were to see us, Fanny, after the way in which we have talked of our grand projects!”

“You did all the talking,” said Fanny. “I only sat by and listened, while your recording angel sharpened his black-lead pencil and wept over the colossal fibs you were telling. Don’t contradict. You know you multiplied the acres of Killigarth by hundreds, established a vinery in full blast, a palm-house several degrees more gorgeous than the one at Kew, turned the dear old cottage into a Tudoresque mansion, and Rosevear into a county heiress.”

Maids in a Market Garden

"Well, she is one, or would be, but for The Usurper," protested Marjory.

"But for her grandfather. The Usurper has done nothing, poor fellow, except risk his bones for her sake and Clara's. As for the Platt-Hennikers, and the Brown-Gingalls and Lady Betts, if ever I meet them when I am driving to market, dangling my legs over the horse's tail, they are at liberty to cut me, or to get up and dangle their legs beside mine. That is all I have got to say." She spoke briskly, and with great determination.

"Fanny's character is beginning to form," Lady Jane whispered in Rosevear's ear.

"As her figure becomes indefinable."

"She has left corsets off. I have noticed it quite recently. Well, I suppose it is a step in the right direction."

"Say a bound from a waist of eighteen inches to one of twenty-five. Heroic girl! What sufferings she must have endured, silently, in her fashionable days. You remember the belt she used to sport? A St. Bernard dog-collar."

"And the heels she used to wear. Certainly Marjory is right, Fanny has lowered

Maids in a Market Garden

herself considerably by going into the gardening business. Come, my dear, and let us see what Maria Mulcher has to say on the subject of horses. I should prefer, in selecting our equipage, as in laying out our garden, to be guided by that estimable person's advice."

XVI

“ON CHOOSING A HORSE.—That this quadruped existed before the Flood, the researches of geologists afford abundant proof. Horses were presented to Abraham by Pharaoh, the monarch of Egypt——”

“This tendency to digression is what I find fault with in Maria. She never seems to realise that one may want to consult her in a hurry; one has to dig the advice one wants from under a stodgy mass of accumulated facts and sonorous platitudes.”

“She is coming to the point, Octavia, dear, if you will only be patient. Listen! ‘From time immemorial the Sahara has bred a noble race of barbs, known by the name of the Wind-sucker, or Desert Horse——’”

“I always thought wind-sucking was a vice, like crib-biting, and the other things one hears of.”

“Never mind the girls; read on, Lady Jane.”

Maids in a Market Garden

"The following anecdote of the attachment of an Arab to his steed has been pathetically described in the following lines——"

Lady Jane's accents were drowned in a clamour of voices.

"O—h ! spare us, please spare us !"

"I knew she would not let us off without quoting that hoary legend. Skip it, for Heaven's sake, and go on. Job will be here with that horse he told us about before there is time to turn round, and how are we to tell his good points from his bad ones unless we know something about the subject ?"

"The hoofs should be elegant in shape, rounded, and small, the pasterns strong yet delicate, the hocks flat and muscular, the forearms——"

"Four legs, she means. I wonder if Maria is given to drinking ?"

"The forearms, or thighs under the shoulders, should be powerful, veinous, and graceful. The chest should be broad, the neck arched and swelling, the head small and long, the eye large and full of fire, the haunches muscular, fleshy, and strong, the barrel well rounded. The animal that comes up to these requirements in every particular

Maids in a Market Garden

may be termed a perfect specimen of the equine *genus*."

"Bravo, Maria! Now we shall be able to see our way. 'Pasterns strong.' What are a horse's pasterns, by-the-bye—his front ankles? Oh, of course! Do you know," giggled Fanny, "that this seems to me an occasion upon which the presence of one of Octavia's iron-handed oppressors would be distinctly advantageous. I feel sure we are going to be cheated; can't tell why, it's in the air. Here's Job with the steed! Do you think he comes of the celebrated Saharan wind-sucking breed, or does he belong to one of the other kind?"

"To the former, I should say. He looks as though air had formed the staple article of his diet for some time past."

The animal thus criticised was being led up and down the patch of shelly gravel before the back door by a farm labourer, while Miller Job leant against the garden gate in conversation with Aunt Hosanna.

"Him be nothing pridy to look at, for sure," commented Aunt Hosanna, "but 'ansum is as 'ansum diz; en ther niver was a trewer zayin'."

Maids in a Market Garden

The plaintive-looking animal turned a lack-lustre eye upon the group now assembled. Lady Jane and her companions regarded him in silence. He certainly did not come up to Maria Mulcher's standard of perfection. His back was hollow and his ribs painfully perceptible ; his legs were clumsy, and his head like a fiddle. Yet Miller Job had said he was a good horse—of his kind.

" Why does he catch up one hind leg when he walks ? " asked Fanny Dormer.

" Cause him a bit of a halter," explained his proprietor.

" Oh," said Fanny, looking wise ; " I thought he might be subject to spasms, that was all."

" Niver ailed since him were borned," said the man. He jerked the bridle, and the animal elevated a rat-like tail, and made some blundering paces. " Woa, will 'ee ! Full o' sperit," he exclaimed aside.

" Would he be quiet in harness ? " hazarded Lady Jane.

" Quiet ! Mite as well driv an ould cow, 'ee mite. Ain't got a keck in he, have 'im ? "

" Not half a keck," testified Miller Job.

" How old is he ? " asked Rosevear.

Maids in a Market Garden

"Risin' five. Look at eas teath; 'em 'll tell 'ee."

A set of long yellow grinders was here displayed, to the evident distaste of their owner.

"Can he pull a load?"

"Can 'im pull a loerd?"

"You jest ask 'im! Aw could'n say vairer than thot, could'n, nayber Job?"

"Naw, sure."

"Aw niver hed th' gift o' th' gab, tes not vouchsafed maw to be ready wi' my tongue, but aw might say a deal abud that 'oarse, an' niver singe my soul for it. Eh, naber?"

"Sure, indeed!"

"And how much do you want for him?"

"Zeven pun ten. Tes givin' o' he away, but the man es owneth th' 'oarse, heeth a leavin' th' country."

"What do you think, girls?" appealed Lady Jane. "Shall we have him or shall we not? I almost think we had better." So the bargain was concluded.

"Stop one moment," Rosevear cried, as the labourer pocketed his money and handed over the horse to the miller, to whose care it was to be entrusted until its own stable

Maids in a Market Garden

could be prepared to receive it. "What is the name of the person who has just sold us this animal?"

"Him said aw win't to tell 'ee till the bargain wer' strook," the hind replied, grinning. "Tis Mester Pengwillian es used to live tew 'eer."

"The rogue Pengwillian!" Rosevear grew poppy-red with indignation.

"If I had only known," she cried, as the heavy boots of the rustic kloppetted down the lane and Job led away their purchase to its accustomed stable, "I could have seized that horse for rent, and defied the wretch to claim him."

"The thing is done and the money paid," said Lady Jane, "and there is no backing out of it. But I shall never be able to look Maria Mulcher in the face again."

XVII

THINGS were making wonderful progress. A year had passed, it was late August again, and the gardeners already began to reap reward of their labours. Peas had been plentiful, beans were a drug in the market, raspberries and currants bent their bushes to the ground. Rosevear had achieved a celery bed, which already promised noble things ; melons were confidently prophesied by the guardians of the greenhouse. Octavia, restored to health and to a more sparing use of the billhook, watched with glowing pride the efforts made by her young plums, cherries, and apple standards to bear all alone, and Fanny had become a connoisseur as to composts and a sage in the matter of mushroom spawn. The fowl-houses stood nobly complete—things of beauty and joys for ever ; and the one bitter drop in Lady Jane's cup was the unwillingness of her young Aylesbury



"HIM BE NOTHING PRIDY TO LOOK AT, FOR SURE." p. 108.



Maids in a Market Garden

ducks to avail themselves of the home comforts provided them.

"It is such a lovely pond—quite like a Roman bath," she used to say, "and yet they will not go into it. Can it be anything in the cement?"

The thought haunted her day and night, and Fanny, who was really a good-natured girl, endeavoured by means of divers well-meant stratagems to relieve the tension of the dear woman's mind.

"Come and look," she would cry, appearing heated and breathless in Lady Jane's presence. "I told you they only wanted time. They are in, every one of them, and swimming about like anything."

But when Lady Jane hastened to banquet on the sight, the last duck would be climbing out of the pond amidst a chorus of indignant quackings, and Fanny's reappearance would be the signal for a general stampede.

Then the Bralima cock, who was on a visit of approval, could not be brought to crow. And everybody knows that a great deal depends upon the crow of a Brahma. To indicate irreproachability of lineage, for

Maids in a Market Garden

instance, it should resemble a donkey's bray as closely as possible. And here was this biped, upon whom the fortunes of the entire poultry yard depended, maintaining a reserve as rigid as that of a monk of La Trappe. Fanny suggested that he might have been hatched dumb, but who ever heard of a voiceless Brahma rooster? In the contemplation of the steed some real comfort was to be obtained. Sahara, as he had been christened by general acclaim, had acquired, under the more generous *régime* prescribed for him, a superficial polish, a less morbidly melancholy expression, and a growing tendency in the direction of plumpness. A light tilted cart had been bought second-hand in Pencarrick, also a suit of plain but neat harness. Nothing was now needed, Lady Jane reflected, but the fruit, flowers, and vegetables wherewith to load the vehicle, a cheap contract with the railway authorities for conveyance of the same to distant markets, and eager buyers to purchase them (for ready money) when they got there.

"You really need cheering," Rosevear said, discovering Lady Jane in a brown

Maids in a Market Garden

study induced by cogitations such as the foregoing. "You, once the most hopeful and energetic of us all, are actually getting below par. I have an idea." She clapped her hands and laughed anticipatively. "This is the last day of harvest. We will go up to Peniel—the big farm that lies just beyond the valley-edge, and hear the reapers cry the neck. You have a Conservative love of ancient customs—Octavia has a Liberal abomination for them. The theme will give you plenty of opportunities for downright argument—just the kind of stimulant you require at the present moment. Put on your hats, girls. Joan and Aunt Hosanna are coming, and Huey Lenine with his fiddle. You have never yet heard Huey fiddle, any of you."

"I have," said little Clara Currey. "Sometimes when I have been sitting alone in the twilight, and he and Joan were together in the kitchen—thinking the house quite empty—I have heard him playing; accompanying her voice, too, sometimes—for she sings quite beautifully."

"You hear," said Rosevear. "Songs by Miss Joan Melhuish, with violin solos by

Maids in a Market Garden

Mr. Huey Lenine, will be on the programme. We will have a good time—a real old Cornish time.”

Rosevear’s persuasions were irresistible. They put on their hats in two minutes and went up to Peniel.

XVIII

THE Peniel home-field, last to succumb to the sharp attack of the sickle, was nearly cut out. Groups of tanned bare-armed men and sun-bonneted women lounged under the hedges or in the shadow of the tall sheaf-capped wheat-stooks, joking, gossiping, and circulating brown stone cider-pitchers from hand to hand, while apple-cheeked urchins of both sexes, replete with blackberries, drop-cake, and potato-pasty, rolled amongst the stubbles at their feet. Westwards, a segment of the sun had already dipped behind the white billows of close-shorn harvest-land that went sweeping down to meet it. And a frosty-pale umbra of the harvest-moon hung in the cold radiant blue of the opposite horizon, just clear of the high ground that combed over to Killigarth Valley, and faintly smiled in mockery of the declining King of Day.

"This is really—nice," said Marjory

Maids in a Market Garden

Dormer, approvingly. The community had seated itself upon a sloping bank at the upper edge of the cornfield, and from this post of vantage viewed the pastoral scene. "This is really quite nice!"

"Marjory greatly reminds me," said Rosevear Trelawney, nibbling a claw of the seeding crowsfoot, "of a globe-trotting literary female whom I once encountered in Norway. We were doing the fjords, and hunting scenery and sunsets generally, and when we had all scurried on deck to look at something especially stupendous—something that brought a lump into one's throat and the water into one's eyes, for very grandeur and solemnity, this baleful person would nod and put up her *pince-nez*—*tousjours* that *pince-nez*—and say how well the thing was done, as if it had been a stage effect carefully calculated beforehand. One began to imagine one heard the fizzing of the lime-light behind the wings; one began to expect a call for the scenic artist and the stage-manager. Throughout the greater part of the excursion she went on, blandly patting Nature on the back, and driving us gradually to frenzy. Then, quite suddenly, she

Maids in a Market Garden

vanished, and was no more seen. I really think somebody must have quietly dropped her overboard. And Marjory reminded me of her just now."

"Marjory has no artistic sensitiveness," cried Fanny jubilantly. "In Italy she was always grumbling about the smells—she would wind, follow up, and analyse a smell, just as an Archae—what do you call him—would determine a period. While as for me—! I never *shall* forget the first time I went into an orange-grove in full bloom, you know. I simply *screamed*, and sat down *flat*!"

"Bravo Fan!"

"Beauty affecteth the gazer in different ways and diverse ;

It filleth (him or her) to the throat, congesting the gurgling channels of speech :

Or it swelleth the sources of (his or her) spirit until it bursteth the floodgates of poesy :

Or druggeth the senses, so that the trembling limbs refuse to fulfil their office ;

For (her or him) and (he or she) exclaimeth, and sitteth down with a bump!"

"Dear me! I am becoming quite Tupperian or Walt Whitmanish, I don't know which. Listen! Huey Lenine is tuning his

Maids in a Market Garden

fiddle," as a long-drawn plaintive wail from the E string quivered to their ears. "And here is Joan coming to us. I wonder what she wants?"

"A bit o' ribben, Miss," said Joan, entreatingly. "Th' men wid have me ask 'ee. 'Tis to bind the 'neck.'"

"To bind whose neck?" Fanny Dormer asked anxiously.

"Please?"

"Joan doesn't realise that you are a stranger to Cornish customs, Fan," said Rosevear. "Lend her the bit of blue ribbon you tied on your hat this morning. I am destitute of any detachable adornment—and you will soon be enlightened."

Fanny graciously complied. Joan hurriedly ran off with her prize, and after the lapse of a minute or two, a straggling procession of harvesters drew near. Foremost in the van hobbled a white-headed ancient, attired in a long smock-frock. Dicky Daisy—for it was the hero of the cabbage episode—carried a miniature wheat-sheaf with projecting arms. It had been very neatly woven, and ornamented with marigolds and other cottage garden flowers, and Miss

Maids in a Market Garden

Dormer's blue ribbon had been tied round its middle, sash-wise, so that it bore no very distant resemblance to a preternaturally stiff baby.

"That is the 'neck,'" exclaimed Miss Trelawney, "and Dicky Daisy, in consideration of his years and virtues, has been elected as High Priest, Chief Druid, and Grand Medicine Man upon this occasion. They are going to march round the field—to the music of Huey's fiddle"—Huey struck up a lively tune—"and then they will all troop up to Peniel mowhay, and"—Rosevear jumped up impetuously, "We will go too. I feel as if somebody had taken me up and dropped me down in the middle ages. Come, Lady Jane, and look as Anglo-Saxon as ever you can. Come, Clara, come Marjory, come—

Doll and Deb, and Sue, and Kate,
and Dorothy Draggletail."

Her enthusiasm was infectious ; the ladies of Killigarth brought up the rear of the motley procession, which after straggling round the field, streamed out of it, and proceeded up the dusty road in the direction of the farm-buildings. Outside the rick-

Maids in a Market Garden

yard, where some of the farm servants and children were already assembled, a pause was made, and Dicky Daisy, bearing his gay burden proudly aloft, entered alone. Then he proclaimed in shrill cracked accents, "Aw have en !"

"Wot have 'ee ?" inquired a stentorian voice from the crowd, evidently in accordance with prescribed formula.

"AW HAVE EN !" repeated Dicky.

"WOT HAVE 'EE ?" bellowed the blacksmith, whose leathern apron, and smudgy arms announced his calling.

"AW HAVE EN ?"

"WOT HAVE 'EE ?"

"*Th' neck, th' neck, th' neck !*" chanted Dicky.

"Hurrah for the neck !" shouted the blacksmith pulling off his hat.

"Hurrah !"

The cheer was twice repeated, and the crowd poured in through the gates.

"They are going to drink the farmer's health in cider, and eat it in cake and cheese," whispered Rosevear.

She turned with her companions to depart, when a touch upon her arm arrested her.

Maids in a Market Garden

"Please," whispered Huey Lenine, "Mr. Polwheal have seen 'ee, and begs ye would be so polite as to step in. There is no mistress body about th' place, him being a widow man, but——"

"I beg your pardon, ladies," said a melancholy voice, as a tall figure barred the way, "but I should be honoured by your stepping in. 'Tis an old country custom to keep open house th' last night of harvest, and since you are so kind as to take an interest——"

Mr. Polwheal coughed bashfully, and Lady Jane graciously accepted the invitation for herself and companions. Supported on the farmer's arm, and followed by her party, the patrician spinster picked her way through the litter of the rickyard and entered the house.

XIX

THE great kitchen of the farmhouse was crowded with people, and lighted with many dip candles. The "neck" already dangled from the middle beam of the ceiling, and mugs of ale and pitchers of cider were being brought in relays from the cellar and briskly passing from hand to hand, with chunks of curranty harvest cake and slices of cheese.

"Please to be seated, ladies," said the farmer, dislodging a row of yellow-headed boys and girls from the settle on which they had mounted. "Ephraim, are these your manners? Janetta, I am surprised at you!"

"'Tis Harry and Mary, father," corrected an elder olive-branch.

"Harry and Mary, then," amended Mr. Polwheal. He encountered the glance of Fanny Dormer, and shook his head, sadly. "There are a dozen of them," he exclaimed,

Maids in a Market Garden

“and they all come very close together, Miss. I had the misfortune to lose their mother a twelvemonth ago. She was an excellent woman, and bore all their names and constitutions in mind in a manner quite marvellous to the beholder, while I”—he shook his head and sighed again—“not possessing her gift, I am apt to mix up my parental duties. This morning, for instance, I gave a tablespoonful of Jones’s Chemical Food to William, who is a strong, healthy boy, while Oliver, who is far from robust, received a dose of brimstone and treacle intended for his brother. The path of a widower, Miss—or Mrs. ?——”

“Miss Dormer,” interjected Fanny, as Mr. Polwheal hesitated inquiringly.

“The path of a widower, Miss Dormer, is beset with obstacles. May I offer you some refreshment ? Wine ? Cake ? Champagne cider ? My poor Drusilla was noted for her champagne cider. Nothing ? Will none of the ladies accept anything ? I am a middling host, I fear, but under the circumstances—being deprived of my right hand, as one may say ! What, Lenine, you are not going without giving us a tune ? and, Joan

Maids in a Market Garden

Melhuish, child, I have not heard a note from you since last Christmas twelvemonth. Joan is a born singer, Miss Dormer. My poor Drusilla had a pretty turn for a ballad in her younger days before I married her, and became what I now am," said the disconsolate mourner.

"Sing to us, Joan," said Miss Trelawney, dexterously stemming the current of Mr. Polwheal's poignant recollections.

"Her be shyed like," said Lenine, showing his strong white teeth in a smile, "Bint 'ee, Joan?"

"No need for shyness," said Mr. Polwheal briskly, "all friends and neighbours here."

Joan Melhuish dropped her black lashes timidly, and made a little curtsy.

"If th' ladies wish——" she began. The rest of the speech was lost in Huey's prelude.

"Tes 'Perra Pentreath,'" he said; and Joan, suddenly throwing her shyness to the winds, drew herself up to her full height, and swelled her deep chest, and sang:

Maids in a Market Garden

PERRA PENTREATH.

Hev ma cheeks lost ther red ?

Perra Pentreath !

Lies th' snow on ma head ?

Perra Pentreath !

That ma glass tells ma trew

Lads' tender glances shoo

Wuldst 'ee a maid shuld woo,

Perra Pentreath ?

Many desire o' ma,

Perra Pentreath !

'Tis thine t' fire ma,

Perra Pentreath !

Ill wisht ma bearin' wan

That life aw'm wearin' on

Cryin', despairin' on,

Perra Pentreath !

Had aw th' Pisky's wand,

Perra Pentreath !

But'ee should bide ma hand ;

Perra Pentreath !

Shudst know th' lack o' peace,

Wild longin' after bliss—

Sue me upo' thy knees—

Perra Pentreath !

Maids in a Market Garden

Aw'd mock thee i' thy pain,
Perra Pentreath !
Wi' looks o' high disdain,
Perra Pentreath !
Pass 'ee at feast or fair,
Wi' words as light as air—
My burden 'ee should bear,
Perra Pentreath !

When wan an' wisht you'm laid,
Perra Pentreath !
Down on a dyin' bed,
Perra Pentreath !
Ere th' pale lids should creep
Down on thy last long sleep,
Aw would ner sigh ner weep,
Perra Pentreath !

But bend thy couch above—
Perra Pentreath !
But whisper to 'ee " Love !
Perra Pentreath ! "
But clasp 'ee to ma breast,
Dyin' wi'ee embraced—
Niver in life so blest—
Perra Pentreath !

The brick-floored, tile-hearthed, old-fashioned kitchen, with its heavy ceiling-beams decorated with dangling fitches, strings of red onions, and last, but not least, the decorated " neck," illuminated by the flickering candle-light, the semicircle of rough lis-

Maids in a Market Garden

tening faces, the handsome bent head of the young fisherman, who coaxed tones of wonderful sweetness out of the very ordinary instrument he handled, and the central figure of the singer, made up a picture not easily to be forgotten. A rope of Joan's silky black hair, loosened from its coil by the tugging fingers of a neighbour's baby, had fallen across her bosom, and her fingers played with it unconsciously as she sang. The grave pure lines of her olive-tinted face and throat, the statuesque proportions of her noble figure, were revealed in their full beauty by the scanty folds of the blue print gown she wore. Her coarse straw hat, with a bunch of poppies and azure blue corn-flowers pinned in it, hung upon her arm. But, as the last of the rich contralto notes died upon the air, and the rough plaudits of her hearers broke out on every side, the girl's Hère-like repose and calm self-possession deserted her. She became the old shy Joan once more, and drowning in blushes, she cast an appealing look towards her mistress, and fairly ran away.

"Well, well!" chorused the farm women.
"The shyness o' she, my dear heart!"

Maids in a Market Garden

"Her be so skeary as a colt, when folks will praise her singin'," said Lenine. "Ye all do knaw how it be wi' her, neighbours?"

"Sure, indeed!"

"Run after th' maid, and bring her back," said Farmer Polwheal.

"'Tain't no guid. Her'll not come unless her be minded."

Huey bent his brown cheek to the fiddle, and dashed into a lively jig. From that he trailed off into the "Banks of Allan Water," and a series of modulations in the minor, spun before long into a shining thread of melody, plaintive, vibrating with mingled anguish and passion. It sounded strangely familiar to Miss Trelawney. Later on, as she walked home with her companions, in the light of the now fully risen moon, she remembered why.

"The 'Night in June,' of course. How stupid of me not to recognise it, especially when it is Clara's favourite song. Lenine must have heard you singing, Clarrikins, and picked it up."

"Have you forgotten, love, so soon,
That night—that lovely night in June?"

trilled Fanny Dormer, as Clara Currey gave

Maids in a Market Garden

no immediate reply. "By the way, Lady Jane, you have made an impression. Mr. Polwheal asked me in confidence before we left whether there was, in Irish parlance, 'a man that owned you.' Also whether you liked housekeeping and had a good memory. Probably with a view to the enlisting of your services in the matter of classifying and labelling his numerous offspring. What shall you say to him when he comes a-wooing, Lady Jane, and O, how do you think the Earl will look when he gets the wedding cards?"

"Lady Jane is not likely to be troubled with Mr. Polwheal's attentions," interposed Octavia before the above-mentioned lady could recover from the shock of Fanny's attack. "He asked me, before he left, whether he might call? and I took pains to let him know that we were determined not to encourage any idle curiosity on the part of the opposite sex. It is best to begin as we mean to go on, is it not? Though we shall have to make an exception in favour of the Vicar, who is coming to pay us a pastoral visit to-morrow."

"How do you know that?"

Maid in a Market Garden

"I met him in Porthporra post-office this morning. He introduced himself, and seemed a sensible, energetic sort of person, very High Church in his views; and with a distinct appreciation of the moral, intellectual, and social advance made by the woman of the Victorian era."

"Well done, Octavia! But if the shepherd is to be allowed within the precincts of the dovecote, why not the farmer? Inconsistency is inconsistency, Betsy Prig, all the world over, and these nice distinctions savour of that vice. Why not the farmer?"

XX

SAHARA stood in harness before the front garden gate. Lady Jane Pegram occupied the driver's seat in the roomy market cart—capable of being turned into a covered vehicle in rainy weather. Rosevear Trelawney sat beside her, and Fanny Dormer, in company with certain baskets and trowels, was comfortably stowed away at the back.

It was ever a proud moment for the community, the remaining members of which had assembled on the gate bridge to watch the start, when the intrepid lady assumed the reins, and bade Sahara—their own Sahara—proceed upon his way.

“O, dear! Is anything wrong?” cried Clara Currey, as the equipage, after moving a little way, came to a dead halt.

“Nothing,” shouted Fanny Dormer.
“Only we have forgotten Maria Mulcher,

Maids in a Market Garden

and she is lying on the garden bench, by the barberry tree, blistering in the sun. Run and fetch her, there's a dear."

Clara willingly performed the errand, and Sahara jogged away in the interests of the newly-established fernery. Then Marjory Dormer went back to the greenhouse to pinch back young cucumbers and dose green-fly with tobacco fumes, while Octavia Wall arrived with a syringe and a bucketful of Carberry's Compound-and-water, repaired to the orchard, and resumed target practice, at short range, upon apple-trees exhibiting symptoms of blight.

"I have tied up dahlias till my back aches," said Clara, wearily, "and murdered earwigs until my whole being revolts from slaughter. Why shouldn't I take a holiday as well as Lady Jane?"

She got her hat and gloves, put on the former without casting a single glance at the looking-glass, and was soon well on her way to Porthporra. The road descended into a gorge, the long-dried channel of some tremendous watercourse. Cattle and sheep grazed on the steep green slopes that rose on either hand—high above a lofty grey-

Maids in a Market Garden

brown peak a kite hung motionless on the still, hot air.

The knitting women seated on the cottage thresholds looked up from their work to give the little creature with the soft grey eyes and the sweet shy smile a pleasant greeting. The noisy groups of girls gathered before the curing-sheds made way for Clara to pass by. Porthporra might at no time be termed a savoury spot, but at the height of the autumn fishery the combinations of odours to be found in its narrow, tortuous streets, paved with cobblestones and hemmed in with low-roofed irregularly-built stone cottages, were as extraordinary as overwhelming. With

Pilchards to right of her,
Pilchards to left of her,

children cleaning pilchards at every gutter, oily looking cats devouring them by every doorstep, boys and men staggering past under the weight of wicker "maunds" heaped up with pilchards, pilchards dangling from strings suspended overhead, pilchards split and peppered, baking in the sun upon slate window sills, and frizzling, split, salted and peppered upon hundreds of frying pans,

Maids in a Market Garden

Clara gasped, overwhelmed. She cast a wistful eye towards the coastguard point, visible high overhead. There was fresh air to be had there, but then the return, through all this fishiness! She paused, and looked about her irresolutely, half-minded to turn back.

“Ma’am!”

Clara started and turned. Huey Lenine stood before her with his yellow curls bare to the sun.

“I ask your pardon, ma’am. ’Twas faether zeed ’ee from th’ lower quay, an’ sethee ‘Tes one o’ th’ ladies from Killigarth, en her’m lost her way.’ An so aw run after ’ee, on th’ chance es aw might help ’ee like.”

“O, you are very kind,” returned Clara, “but I have not lost my way, thank you. I came out for a little fresh air.”

“Tes th’ wrong quarther t’ come tew seekin’ for fresh air, Porthporra, i’ th’ pelchard season,” said Huey Lenine, expanding his well-cut nostrils in a confirmatory whiff. “Poor folk like we din’t take no special note of it, bein’ bred to it as we ar’, but tes different wi’ a lady. If ’ee would care to take a course in th’ boat



"THE KNITTING WOMEN LOOKED UP FROM THEIR WORK." p. 135.

Maids in a Market Garden

now, though our womenfolk dew shun th' say, gentry are different! And aw wid be proud to take 'ee——"

"To take me for a sail?" said Clara, with brightening eyes. "You are very kind. It would be delightful. But I must not interfere with your work. Perhaps——"

"No work, no work!" returned Lenine, eagerly. "Me, an' th' boy, an' th' boat are idle till next tide. And if 'ee would care, we might sail out a mile or so en cast a line. I could promise 'ee sport of some kind or another." He looked eagerly at Clara.

The temptation was not to be resisted. Clara yielded. Huey, with a bright face, ran down the steep, slippery, natural stairway of rock that led to the nearer quay, springing like a chamois from shelf to shelf.

She leant her elbows on the narrow harbour wall, and watched him as he unmoored his boat from its iron ring and brought it alongside the quay. A sturdy urchin, responding to a stentorian hail, left a group of other lads at play and joined in hauling in the anchor. Then the yellow curls and the blue-eyed sunburnt face reappeared on

Maids in a Market Garden

Clara's level, and guided by the young fisherman's powerful hand, she made her way down the perilous stairs. Then strong arms lifted her over the gunwale. A few moments later and the boat crept out of the narrow jaws of the haven. The creaking sweeps were laid in, foresail and sprit mainsail bellied with the first gentle puff from the west. The boy tumbled over and took the helm. Huey swung himself lightly up the mast, and the gaff-topsail shook out its red folds with a sound like the cracking of a drover's whip.

"Now she'll show some pace." He dropped down beside Clara, and the boy went forward again. "Th' air be fresh enough out here, ma'am, 'int 'en?"

"It is lovely," responded Clara, with a rapturous sigh.

The haven, with its whitewashed cottages, jutting quays, and frowning bastions of sombre slate, had sunk from view behind the sharply outlined masses of the Peak. On the left hand a precipitous sweep of coastland, indented with little bays, masked the outgate of the tidal river. Rame Head brooded a clear blue mass upon the sea-line,

Maids in a Market Garden

while on the northern horizon, hidden behind a vale of haze, the Lizard might be guessed at.

" 'Tis a fair day, wi' little wind an' a smooth sea, fit for a lady's sailing. But, ma'am, aw have seen a tide ragin' afore a south-east gale that overtopped th' Peak, an' leapt upon the haven an' crunched th' boats an' housen as a dog wid crunch a bone. 'Twas afore they built th' new quay, an' aw was but a littl' fella i' petticoose, but aw mind it as clear as if 't happened yesterday. Will 'ee please to cast a line, ma'am? There be plenty fish just here. Have us a lash, Teddy, ma son? "

" Ay," responded Teddy.

" A lash is a bait, ma'am," Huey explained. The man and boy lowered sail expeditiously, the anchor splashed overboard with a sudden clanking, and a tightening drag showed that it held fast.

Clara watched her host interestedly as he got out the lead-lines, and, extracting some hooks from a broken teacup, whipped them on with dexterous neatness. Then he reached a pilchard from a tin bucket amongst the ballast-weights, and, opening his clasp knife,

Maids in a Market Garden

sliced away a neat strip of the tough silvery skin just above the tail.

"O!" cried Clara, in horror. The unfortunate pilchard had wriggled. Huey dropped it as if it had burnt his fingers, and stared at the young lady in astonishment.

"Please?"

"It is alive. Pray, pray, put the poor thing out of its misery," Clara begged, shutting her eyes tightly.

"Dear heart, to think o' that now!" ejaculated Huey. He caught up the fish, and stunned it with a couple of blows upon the thwart. "Rough fellas like we think lettle o' sich things, ma'am," he said apologetically. "If us wer' t' kill ivery fish us takes by th' line or th' drift us widn't make much of a livin', aw reckon!"

"Perhaps not. But there are some things——" Clara shuddered. "For instance, I passed through the kitchen the other day while Aunt Hosanna was boiling a lobster—*alive*! And it poked the lid of the saucepan up, and put out its head; I shall never forget the expression of its face." She shut her eyes again. "It was dread-

Maids in a Market Garden

ful—dreadful! I shall never eat lobster again. And yet Aunt Hosanna is a good, kind woman, and reads her Bible regularly.”

“Ay, ma’am, sh’ does so. But aw doubt whether ther’ be any guidin’ word i’ th’ Testament as to dealin’ wi’ fish and shelly sea-trade. Simple folk needs a plain chart ter steer by, an’ if there wer’ sich a text as ‘Th’ marciful man es marciful tew hes lobster,’ or such, us’ud know how t’ go vore. But ther’ bint no sich a word. Ee see, ma’am, th’ Master en His disciples they was fishermen same as we be, en they knawed that pelchard ’ll take none but fresh bait, en that a dead-biled lobster niver ates nigh so well as a live-biled ’un. Or ’em wid ha’ laid down commandments like, en spiled trade.”

Clara was stricken dumb by this outburst of original theology.

“So, ma’am,” Huey went on in a deep melodious monotone, casting the baited lines overboard, and watching the output with an experienced eye; “th’ lobsters en the pelchards mun put up wi’ ther share o’ trouble i’ this world. Us as ketches ’em

Maids in a Market Garden

has enough, what wi' th' frost-bite an' roomatty pains, en th' cramp that turns a man's joints tew iron when he've bin castin' for eight or ten hours maybe, on a could winter's day, wi' nought but th' bitter gale in s'teeth, en the black conger takin' th' hukes so fast as him can tie 'em on. Or th' dogs sleep i' the bottom o' the boat, wi' a tarpaulin for all coverin', en the stars winkin' overhead, as th' big steamers bears down on us out o' the darkness, for all the world as if 'em wer' makin' game o' the little value o' a poor man's life."

"But you carry lights, and so do the steamers, and there are so few accidents."

"Sa few as gets into the papers, ma'am. I know a man—tes a silly ould creature th' children mocks i' Porthporra streets tew day. But not long ago he had his senses, and wer' a good fisherman an' master o' a smart boat. 'Twere some bigger than this—him had a man tew help 'n so well as th' boy—hes own lad, as was boun' 'prentice tew him. One night—likely en fair, in a calm say en no fog—th' man es wer' forward shouts 'Steamer, ahoy!' She wer' close upon 'em. 'God!' cries the

Maids in a Market Garden

master, 'don't 'em see th' lights?' Hailed agen, 'em did, but the steamer kept on her course, an' cut th' boat en tew. Th' man as wer' forward, him was struck en stunned, en went down like lead. But th' master, him wer' a strong man, en wi' his little lad hangin' round his neck, him made a leap like for the steamer's bow chains, en got hould en clambered up. Ma'am, them aboard hammered hes knuckles wi' a belayin' pin tew force him tew let go, en th' cap'n bid him drown en be damned. But he wer' desp'rate, en fowt for his lad's life an' his own. An' as in spite of 'em all, him wer' gotten over th' side, th' arms about his neck were loosed, an' the child screamed en fell away into the blackness. An' my uncle—'twas my mother's own brother—leapt in among they murderers en tould 'em what 'em had done, en that some should hang for 't. 'Em might ha' flung he overboard, but they dared not lay a hand on him. So him got safe ashore and told his story, en there was inquiry made, but 'twas one man's word against many—ther' wer' no justice for he. An' what with grievin'—for th' wife died in her trouble wi' th' news of her lad's loss—an'

Maids in a Market Garden

what wi' broodin' over his wrongs, an' what wi' poverty—for him had lost all him had, every pennord—he got what like him be now. You'm got a fish on your line, ma'am."

"How can you tell?"

"Poise the line so, between your fingers, an' ee'll feel a kin' o' tremble like. Tes a bream, sure enough. Teddy ha' got one already, hav'nt 'ee, ma son?"

"Tew," said the stolid Teddy, dexterously whisking two plump, silvery bodies out of their natural element, and relieving them of the treacherous morsels which they had weakly bolted, with rough unceremoniousness.

"O, O!" screamed Clara, thoroughly roused, as something red and pink and golden came wriggling upwards through the translucent green depths under the lugger's stern, and a gasping gurnard flopped and quivered on the rough brown planks. Huey slapped his leg ecstatically, and shouted with laughter, and even the sober Teddy vouchsafed to chuckle.

"Aw dew just glory in seein' 'ee. Wi' your eyes as bright as di'monds, an' your



“POISE THE LINE SO, BETWEEN YOUR FINGERS.” p. 144.

Maids in a Market Garden

little hand like a snowflake on th' line. An' such a one as 'ee be to bide th' rowlin'. Why, there's not a woman i' Porthporra but wid ha' been layin' along th' ballast by now, cravin' ter be put ashore. Ter'ble mis'ble sailors 'em be, one an' all. 'Tis a conger 'ee have there, ma'am—a tough customer."

Huey threw down his own line and stepped to the rescue. There was a heavy strain on the line, which Clara had incautiously twined about her wrist. The brown strong hands covered the little white ones a moment, as they had done on the occasion of Octavia's accident a little while before. Both remembered.

"I think I will ask you to land me now, please," said Clara, when the excitement attendant on the capture of the conger had subsided. "I may be missed at home, and I think it is getting a little cold, cold and—dark." She shivered.

The bright day had become suddenly overcast, and the boat had begun to plunge at her cable as the wind shifted to the southwest. The three miles that lay between the lugger and the haven were covered almost in

Maids in a Market Garden

silence. When Clara had spoken it was to ask the name of the boat.

"The Joan," Huey had answered.

"The Joan! If I had a boat I think I should christen her 'The Pisky,'" Clara said listlessly.

"Would 'ee, ma'am?" Huey returned eagerly. "T'es a proper name, sure enough. Aw'll paint the other out to-morrow, an' th' 'Pisky' shall stand in its stead."

"Oh! no, no," Clara protested, vaguely startled, she could not tell why.

"There's the Pisky's Cove, now." Huey pointed to a sheltered little nook lying eastward of Porthporra, walled in by brake-fringed cliffs, and floored with fine grey sands, over which a little rivulet rippled on its way to the sea. "'Twas there the piskies used to gather i' the old times, and dance, an' veast, an' drink red wine out o' cups o' crystal. Ther's a story tellin' of a man—a fisher-lad like me—es got 'ould o' one o' ther caps en th' fairies gev him gould en jewels en gay clothes, en what'n all, t' get it back agen." He set his teeth hard and bent his brows as the lugger lay on the homeward tack and the creaking boom

Maid in a Market Garden

shifted over. "Ther' be no piskies nowa-days, folks say, but if so be es one wer' left, en aw' could once get a grip o' he, aw wud niver latt him free," said Huey Lenine, "till aw had ma heart's desire."

"And what is your heart's desire?" questioned Clara, incautiously. "I beg your pardon! I ought not to have asked!" She crimsoned as she spoke from brow to throat. But Huey Lenine gave her her answer.

"To be a gentleman!"

XXI

FANNY DORMER, coming cautiously downstairs at five of the clock upon a bright October morning, opened the porch-door—outside which three pensioned cats sat waiting for eleemosynary scraps and saucers of milk—and stepped into the dewy garden.

Early as she was, someone had been before her. There were ruthless gaps apparent in a row of promising young spinach-plants, and the diminution perceptible amongst the ranks of her cherished cauliflowers went to the heart of the gardener. She visited a roughly-erected shed, where carrots, potatoes, onions, and German sausage-like roots of beet were modestly reposing upon a layer of clean wheat-straw. The unpadlocked door stood ajar—the traces of the midnight marauder were only too plainly visible. Fanny's indignation broke into speech.

"Wretch!" She shook her fist at an

Maids in a Market Garden

invisible personality. "If I could only catch you, whoever you are, I'd——"

She frowned darkly, and turned with disdain upon a scarecrow, the work of her own hands, and the pride of her heart when first erected. It was attired (much to the scandalisation of Lady Jane) in a pair of ancient corduroys, once the property of Miller Job, and a long-sleeved waistcoat of tattered fustian. Its deerstalker hat had once adorned the intellectual brows of Octavia Wall, and the stick it levelled gun-wise, while imposing upon the credulity of the rabbit tribe, had proved inadequate to restrain the predatory invasions of the wearer of the enormous pair of hobnailed boots, whose clumsy impressions were deeply marked in the rich light soil of beds and borders.

"If you could speak, you'd be of some use," apostrophised Fanny, shaking her head at the scarecrow. "As it is"—she laid imperious hands upon the forlorn simulacrum, dragged it away, and cast it into a disused summer-house, contemptuously.

The summer-house had a bench, Aspinalled to a cheering and suggestive pea-greenness,

Maid in a Market Garden

whereon lay a mildewed copy of Maria Mulcher's immortal work on gardening, and a bouquet of newly-cut hothouse flowers. The book bore Rosevear's initials scribbled on the flyleaf; to the bouquet was attached a slip of paper, directed to Miss Trelawney. At sight of it, Fanny's light grey eyes twinkled mischievously.

"The sixth within a fortnight," she mused. "If love is, as some people say, a fever, The Usurper certainly has got it badly. Poor young man! Can it be that he carries away our cabbages and beets as tender mementoes? But no! There are two secret trespassers upon the Killigarth demesne. One comes for love, and the other for lucre. And both their little games have been found out by Fanny Dormer, and she means to speed the one and spoil the other—or know the reason why."

She produced a pencil as she spoke, and tearing a leaf from her pocket book, inscribed on it in bashful lead characters: "So many thanks for the beautiful flowers."

"As well be hung for a sheep as a lamb," she said, after a moment's hesitation, appending the initials "R. T." to the docu-

Maids in a Market Garden

ment. Then she rolled up a small pebble in it, and threw it over the garden-hedge, and fled, at the barking of a dog, and the sound of masculine footsteps in the lane below. But as the footsteps retreated, Fanny emerged from her concealment, and peeping through a convenient cranny in the hedge, was rewarded with the back view of a stalwart young gentleman in a shooting suit of shabby velveteen, who was striding very fast down the lane, followed by a red setter. Before he vanished from sight he turned and looked back, long and lingeringly, and Fanny giggled as he kissed a crumpled scrap of paper and thrust it in his breast. She laughed outright later as she dug a hole and buried *The Usurper's* tribute—not without a sigh of regret—under a gooseberry bush, and then went back to breakfast.

Lady Jane proposed, after this meal, that they should all go down to the cellar, and look at the cider. For, after a recipe provided by the infallible Maria Mulcher, and with the loan of a circular stone trough from Miller Job, and a couple of mighty pestles to correspond, a certain portion of the moderate orchard yield had been converted,

Maids in a Market Garden

by the united efforts of the community, into a kind of apple-poultice, which, after an anxious and adhesive period of squeezing, draining, and straining, had been poured into three tubs of handsome size, and placed in the cellar to await its conversion into the above-mentioned beverage.

It was a noble sight when Lady Jane, divested of her cuffs, girded with an apron, and armed with a Brobdingnagian wooden ladle, went from receptacle to receptacle stirring and skimming the desultory and intrusive pip from the frothy surface of the weird compound.

"How it bubbles!" said Marjory, doubtfully, "and what a curious crackling sound!" She bent an inquiring ear to the side of a tub, and looked up with an eye full of apprehension. "Can't be anything wrong, can there?"

"'CIDER. Preparation of. This enlivening and agreeable beverage was known to the Ancients. C. contains from $5\frac{1}{2}$ to 9 per cent. of alcohol, and is intoxicating when drunk in quantity.'"

"In what quantity? But of course Maria will not say."

Maids in a Market Garden

“ ‘ The juice having been separated from the pulp, and the process of fermentation having been completed, draw off the liquid from the sediment, bottle, and await the result.’ ”

“ What a Delphic utterance. I wonder whether it is ready for bottling now ? ” Clara Currey questioned, anxiously.

Each tasted the muddy sub-acid liquid solemnly in turn, and decided that it was.

The landlord of the Porthporra alehouse, which establishment boasted the appropriate sign of “ The Three Pilchards,” was consulted, and supplied six dozen bottles at a reasonable price. And when at the close of an arduous morning’s labour Lady Jane corked and wired the seventy-second half-pint, as Clara and Marjory arranged the others in neat battalions upon the cellar shelves, it was generally felt that something had been achieved.

But thirty-six hours later Marjory Dormer woke up in the middle of a dream of a gorgeous pyrotechnic display at the Crystal Palace. “ Pop-pop ! pop-pop-pop ! poppa-pop ! poppapoppapoppapopp-pop ! ” Those

Maids in a Market Garden

were the rockets and squibs. "Bang! BANG!!" That was the heavy set-piece.

"Fanny!"

She clutched the sleeper's arm.

"Why did you wake me?" grumbled Fanny, "I was dreaming the last R.H.A. ball at Woolwich all over again. Captain Cracknell—you know the man with the lovely eyelashes—had just taken me into supper, and the band was playing, and the champagne corks were popping, like!" she started, "Why I can hear them now. It can't be——!"

She put on her dressing-gown hurriedly, and knocked at Lady Jane's door.

"Come in. Dear me!" Lady Jane sat up alertly. "Is anything wrong? You roused me from a curious dream. The Liberals and Socialists had united in rebellion, and were marching upon Llwddllm to raze it to the ground. Papa and the girls had retreated to the chapel crypt, while, arrayed in a full suit of fourteenth-century plate-mail, belonging to one of our ancestors, I was cheering our retainers on to battle. The missiles of the besiegers rattled against the walls, our culverins crashed from

Maids in a Market Garden

the battlements." She stopped, and meeting the foreboding glance of Fanny, sprang briskly out of bed. Ere long the entire community of Female Fruit and Flower Gardeners, attired more or less airily and unconventionally, and armed for the most part with bedroom candles—the more apprehensive spirits brandished pokers—assembled upon the stairs leading to the cellar. The "pop-popping" continued, the smart explosions recurred at intervals, mingled with a good deal of gurgling and splashing, and a dark-coloured rivulet, making its way under the cellar door, converted itself into a ciderfall down the three steps that led to it, and gaily meandered in the direction of the coal hole. There was nothing to be done but to regret that Maria Mulcher had not been more explicit in her directions, and to go back to bed.

"I suppose it was the noise of the bursting bottles mixed up with my dreams," remarked Octavia to Clara. "But I thought I was delivering an address upon the Rights of Women at a very unruly meeting of East-end costerwomen, and the eggs were smashing on the wall behind me."

Maids in a Market Garden

“And I was out on the wide sea, miles away from shore, in a fishing boat,” said little Clara. “And—the fisherman—was knocking a pilchard’s head against the thwart—rap—rap—rap—so that it might not feel when he cut slices off its tail, for bait, you know. Was it not kind of him?”

“I,” murmured Rosevear Trelawney, as she stood at her open casement and looked out into the moist velvet blackness of the night-veiled garden, and listened to the impatient babbling of the sleepless little trout stream at the bottom of the hill—“I dreamed that Trelawney tottered and fell, and buried The Usurper in the ruins. And I leaned on a mound of masonry, and heard him, ever so far down, tap, tap, tapping at the solid stone, and calling on me to dig him out. Why should he call on me? He is no more to me than the blundering night moth that is trying to singe its stupid wings in my candle.” But she caught the moth, and put it gently out of the window, before she extinguished her candle and musingly went back to bed.

XXII

A SPIDERY, high-bodied gig pulled up at Killigarth garden-gate. Farmer Polwheal, of Peniel, got down, solidly and carefully, and handed the reins to the male olive-branch who accompanied him.

“Don’t ’ee chuck at the mare’s mouth, now, Thomas, there’s a good lad,” the parent said, warningly, as he led the animal to the roadside. Thomas, who had been addressed, for once, by the name which was his special property, nodded, and bit a piece out of the large green cooking apple with which he had thoughtfully provided himself, while the farmer, after extracting a huge stack of dahlias and a little covered basket from under the gig-seat, entered the precincts sacred to the horticultural and agricultural enterprises of the Limited Liability Company of Female Fruit and Flower Gardeners.

Maid in a Market Garden

Mr. Polwheal coughed, affirmatively, behind the dahlias, and grew perceptibly moister. Lady Jane suggested that he should be seated. Mr. Polwheal thanked her and declined.

"For happening to be, ma'am, a man of a solid sort of build," said Mr. Polwheal, "I make a point of avoiding furniture which is not made to correspond. Basket chairs"—he cast a timorous eye around him—"basket chairs especially. It was a favourite saying of my poor Drusilla's—I am, as you perhaps may have heard——"

"Yes, yes!" Lady Jane interrupted hurriedly.

"That my appearance in her best parlour was somewhat akin to that of the proverbial arrival of the Bull in the china shop. My late poor wife was remarkably gifted in her conversation. I would say that if she were here, my—my lady—I should find less difficulty in expressing myself. But that her—her presence would naturally obviate the purpose with which I have ventured——" Mr. Polwheal broke down.

"Quite so." Lady Jane really pitied him as he loomed redly over his dahlias, and



"FARMER POLWHEAL." p. 158.

Maids in a Market Garden

shifted from leg to leg. "You were saying that the object of your visit——"

"The objects," said Mr. Polwheal, desperately. "I don't deny that at first I may have put it in the singular, secretly, and in my own mind, when I saw one I cannot now particularise by name, sitting in my chimney-corner on harvest-night. The thought darted through my head like the—like the toothache. But when the system—your system, and the principles upon which your community is conducted, were explained to me"—Oh, Octavia, Octavia!—"I confined myself strictly to the plural."

"I—I don't comprehend!" faltered Lady Jane, lost in a grammatical maze.

"My state, my lady, as perhaps you have heard before, is that of a widower," resumed Mr. Polwheal, a little cooler now that the inevitable plunge had been taken. "I am well off, if not rolling in my thousands; and while my present young family are comfortably provided for—under their proper names—in my will, my second wife—if I married again—would have no reason to complain of herself and her young family being at all overlooked. If the farmhouse

Maids in a Market Garden

is objected to I should have no objection to build a suitable residence upon my property, and settle it satisfactorily. A pianoforte of the Grand description and a pony-carriage would not be a tax upon my means. Nor would the household accounts be interfered with, or the egg-and-butter money regarded as otherwise than a little extra for the purchase of pins and other nick-nacks ; which brings me back to where I started."

Merciful heavens ! Was the man going on for ever ?

"I am a man with a natural respect for principles," laboriously continued Mr. Polwheal, "and the leading principle of your community, as it has been explained to me by one of its members, being 'A clear start, equal chances, and fair shares all round,' I should be the last man going, to go against that principle. Therefore, I would not venture to ask any special lady by name to become the second Mrs. Polwheal, but beg that the proposal may be considered as a general one, to be discussed amongst you, and the issue decided by ballot, which might be of advantage in affording everyone an

Maids in a Market Garden

equal chance, and in preventing confusion. Six acceptations," said Mr. Polwheal, mildly, "being likely to prove as embarrassing as six rejections in the long run."

The room heaved and pitched before the dazzled eyes of Lady Jane. She sat down abruptly in a chair. Mr. Polwheal had taken her breath away, and when, in some measure, she recovered her composure, she found that he had taken his leave. But six bunches of dahlias lay upon the table, the mystery of Mr. Polwheal's horticultural haystack being thus revealed, and six neat little tins of clotted cream had been ranged in front of these floral tributes by the same comprehensive wooer.

XXIII

"THE Female Fruit and Flower Gardeners of Killigarth Farm present their united compliments to Joshua Polwheal, Esq., of Peniel, and whilst deeply sensible of the honour conferred upon them, collectively and individually, by his proposal, beg to inform him that circumstances over which they have absolute control render it impossible to entertain the same.

(Signed) JANE PEGRAM { (Secretary
L.L.C.F.F.F.G.)

ROSEVEAR TRELAWNEY.

CLARA CURREY.

OCTAVIA J. WALL.

MARJORY DORMER."

"Come, Fan, we are waiting for you."

Fanny shrugged her shoulders, and looked askance out of the corners of her light grey eyes.

"So you are bent on crushing the poor man altogether. In common mercy I ought

Maids in a Market Garden

to refrain from adding my weight to the blow. Six rejections in a lump! It is awful."

"As you please," said Octavia, launching a double-shafted gleam of sarcasm from her shining spectacles. "Perhaps we had better add a postscript, or rider, to the effect that one of our number, Miss Fanny Dormer to wit, has refrained from joining in the general negative, and wishes it to be understood that she is open to further negotiations."

"You need not trouble," returned Fanny, flushing pink. "Sign for me, Marjory, my child, if you will. It is legal in the case of twins, I believe, and I am going down to the stables," Fanny ended.

Rosevear Trelawney turned a meaning look upon her.

"You really intend to ride to the meet to-morrow?"

"Why not? Cub-hunting is not a wild and reckless form of sport, but it is better than nothing. I have got a habit still decent, and my hat is not so seedy when you look at it from a proper distance. The mount might be better, I think, but Sahara

Maids in a Market Garden

—even Sahara is preferable to Shank's mare. And if I break his knees," said Fanny decisively, "I will pay for them, that's all." She nodded to the community, and went away to order the noble animal an extra feed of oats.

"Though sacksful would not infuse one grain more of spirit into him," she remarked, with some bitterness, upon the following morning, when Mr. Pengwillian's late property was led to the door.

"Does not he look as if he knew that saddle was a borrowed one, and that the other horses will turn up their noses at him as a miserable outsider! Sahara has no proper pride. I hate that Uriah Heep-like spirit of humility—even in a brute."

She mounted, with Miller Job's assistance, and cantered away.

"I want to consult you, Rosevear," said Lady Jane, as Miss Trelawney re-entered the house. "There is a very good garden at Trelawney, is there not?"

"I have always believed so. The fruit, hothouse flowers, and vegetables used to be magnificent in my father's time, and I have heard that they maintain their reputation.

Maids in a Market Garden

Indeed, all the first prizes at the Pencarrick Horticultural Show this year were carried off by Mr. Vosper's head gardener."

"Then why do they require so much from us? The head bailiff drove over here some weeks ago, and begged to open a deposit account. He paid thirty pounds in advance, and since then every flower, every vegetable that we do not require for home use has been sent to Trelawney; and to-day I have received a letter asking for more cauliflowers. They can't sell them again—it is impossible that they can eat them. I confess myself at a loss to understand the object of this enthusiastic patronage."

"Patronage!"

Rosevear drew her lithe, tall figure to its utmost height, and transfixed the astonished Lady Jane with a look of burning indignation.

"Patronage; I see—I see it all. Oh, Lady Jane—if you have any regard for me—any pity——"

"My dear?"

"Send Mr. Vosper back his money! decline to supply him, upon this insultingly transparent pretext, with another bunch of

Maids in a Market Garden

chrysanthemums—another couple of cucumbers—another single cauliflower. It is—oh ! it is out of pity for me—me, a Trelawney, reduced to earn my bread by the labour of my hands, that this ‘patronage’ is extended. Do you not see ? ”

“ There may be something in what you say. Indeed, I am almost certain, now I begin to think, that the head bailiff mentioned you by name when he first called to open the account with our company. Indeed ”—Lady Jane was becoming alarmingly wide awake—“ he asked which department of garden labour engrossed your services most particularly ; and upon my replying the vegetable beds, immediately began to order spinach and cauliflowers. H’m ! Yes, I think there is certainly something in what you say. And do you wish me to refund the money, and reject further custom ? I appreciate your spirit, but business is business, and I cannot see why we should insist upon making Mr. Vosper a free gift of several market-cartloads of garden produce.”

“ Deal with the matter as you will, dear Lady Jane ; only let it be settled somehow.”

“ I might convey the compliments of the

Maids in a Market Garden

company in a coldly-expressed note, and intimate that the estate is no longer capable of responding to the drain upon it, especially in the article of cauliflowers. We can dispose of them instead to the Plymouth dealer who wrote to me some time ago, or to the Truro greengrocer. The letter of the last-named person has a familiar ring about it—something in the turning of the sentences—as if I had corresponded with the writer before, and yet it is quite certain that I have never done so.”

She handed the letter to Rosevear. It ran as follows :

Integrity Mount, Truro, October 10.

DEAR MADAM,—In reply to your advertisement, I may state that, being in the general green-dealing line, and anxious to establish a wider connection, I am prepared to take as much of the garden and farm produce of the Killigarth Limited Liability Company of Female Fruit and Flower Gardeners as I can get.

I remain, madam

(in the hope that, D.V., our business connection may be a profitable one),

JOSHUA PETHERWICK,

Teetotal Greengrocer.

P.S.—Kindly direct all hampers, invoices, &c., to above address.

“ It seems satisfactory enough.”

Maids in a Market Garden

"Mr. Petherwick writes like a respectable person, and there is a large market at Truro. This may lead to good things."

Hopeful Lady Jane!

Octavia broke in upon the colloquy. She, too, had a word in private to say to Rosevear.

"I am not given to apprehensions and alarms, as you know," she said, drawing Miss Trelawney aside; "but I am getting really anxious about Clara. She is dreadfully changed of late, loses flesh and spirits, and goes about looking as white as a little ghost. There! I am the last woman in the world to speak seriously of ghosts, but the child has had a shock, there is no denying it."

She shook her head with such infinite meaning, and her spectacles gleamed so mysteriously, that Rosevear looked at her in surprise.

"Clara is the soul of honour and sincerity," went on Octavia, "and a statement which would be more than doubtful from the lips of nineteen girls out of twenty may be credited as coming from hers. She only confided in me fully last night, and I confess—though I have seen a Mahatma's

Maids in a Market Garden

cocked-hat note flutter down from the ceiling with cold incredulity, and a jam tart materialised on to a china plate has failed to awaken one responsive chord to a unanimously expressed belief in Astral Force—that there appears to be something odd about this ! ”

“ My dear Octavia ! Odd about what ? ”

“ About her meeting a Figure, draped in white, in the garden on several successive nights. She has taken lately to wandering about alone in the starlight while we are reading or working in here.”

“ A figure draped in white ? What kind of a figure ? ”

“ A female figure, Clara thinks. My dear girl, how pale you are. Let me get you some *sal volatile*.”

“ No, no. I must hear about this.”

“ There is no more to tell. She has seen it three times altogether ; once in the orchard, twice in the garden. It seems to glide from place to place with a halting, hobbling, kind of a gait.”

Rosevear uttered a kind of groan.

“ And Clara declares that on her approaching it it has vanished through the hedge.

Maids in a Market Garden

And that she has heard the sound of wheels rolling away, as though some conveyance—fancy a ghost keeping a carriage!—had been waiting for it.”

“Had it—did it carry anything in its arms?”

“Now you speak of it, I remember that Clara mentioned its being burdened with something—she could not guess what. It might have been a child, she said.”

“Limping, hobbling, carrying a baby. The Lame Lady!”

“The Lame Lady?”

“Say nothing to Clara. O! we Cornish folk are superstitious, Octavia, and sometimes with good reason. More than one of our old families have their warning apparitions, their signs and tokens of coming trouble or of coming death. The Carews, the Arundells, the Trevilles have the white hare, the fiery child, the mourning coach with the headless horses; and the Trelawneys have the lame lady with her baby. Why, father saw her before he died.”

“Rosevear!”

“It is meant for me.” Rosevear laid her hand upon Octavia’s shoulder. “Why

Maid in a Market Garden

should it come to Clara, poor child?" she said, calmly. She was quite composed. Her topaz-yellow eyes were undimmed, and the flush on her cheeks had scarcely faded. Octavia's heart sank. In imagination she saw the lid of a coffin close over those lovely locks, those sunset tresses. And yet she had mocked at the Mahatma's cocked-hat notes and raspberry tarts.

"You really mean that you think something is about to happen? That this—this appearance is really a forewarning?"

"Most firmly. Ask Aunt Hosanna. But, no! Say nothing to any one. What is to be will be," said Rosevear Trelawney, solemnly. Then her hand tightened rigidly upon Miss Wall's shoulder. Her lips grew white. She pointed out of the window with a gesture of Sibylline intensity, and rushed from the room.

"What is it? Oh! What?" cried Octavia, following.

A funereal procession was winding up the garden path.

XXIV

FIRST came a groom whose livery coat was torn and muddy, and whose features were bespattered. A couple of rustic hangers-on followed the groom, and four stout labouring men came after these, carrying a hurdle. Something muddy and very still lay upon the rude litter, covered with a coat. And upon one side walked Fanny Dormer, muddy and hatless, and upon the other Farmer Polwheal loomed, ruddy and gigantic as ever.

"We brought him here," Fanny panted, in response to the agitated inquiries that greeted her. "It was the nearest house—and it was all Sahara's fault. I never could have believed that horse would have behaved so. He had had more oats than he was accustomed to, and they got into his head. That is the only explanation possible."

Maids in a Market Garden

“Fetch water and brandy, as quickly as you can,” said Rosevear, in answer to Lady Jane’s shriek of alarm. “It is only a swoon—his heart is beating.”

As the men set the hurdle down upon the floor she knelt beside the unconscious man, and unfastened the tightened shirt-collar with quick, tender fingers. There was a cut upon his head, from which the blood had flowed profusely, and the arm that lay helplessly across his breast was evidently broken.

“Why, it is The Usurper,” whispered Clara Currey in Octavia’s ear, as Rosevear wetted the young man’s pallid lips and temples with the brandy.

The groom, overhearing, corrected her respectfully.

“I beg your pardon, ma’am, but you are wrong. That is my master, Squire Vosper.”

Lady Jane lifted her hands and eyes in amazement. She might have uttered some exclamation had not Rosevear Trelawney turned upon her with a fierce imperiousness which stifled the words upon her lips.

Maids in a Market Garden

"What does it matter who or what he is when he may be dying? Let these men"—she beckoned to the farm labourers—"carry him to one of the bedrooms—mine is the nearest—and you"—she spoke to the groom—"ride to Pencarrick and bring back a surgeon with you. Let there be no delay, if you value your master's life."

The man vanished instantly. The hurdle, with its helpless burden, was borne upstairs. Fanny sank limply into a chair.

"What I have undergone to-day," she said, emphatically, "nobody knows but myself. Please sit down, Mr. Polwheal, I am sure you must be exhausted."

"I am intruding, Miss, I fear," said the farmer, "and will take my leave. I hope the poor young gentleman may recover."

"I hope he will," assented Fanny (they were alone, the attention of Lady Jane and the other members of the community being, for the moment, engaged by the patient upstairs).

"It's a bad job," commented Mr. Polwheal, looking into the crown of an immense curly-



"ROSEVEAR WETTED THE YOUNG MAN'S PALLID LIPS AND TEMPLES
WITH THE BRANDY." p. 175.

Maids in a Market Garden

brimmed hat, and heaving a ponderous sigh.

"But it might have been worse," sighed Fanny. "Suppose, for instance, it had been you."

"Me?" said Mr. Polwheal.

"A married man," continued Fanny.

"A widower, Miss," corrected Mr. Polwheal.

"A widower with a large family," went on Fanny.

"Twelve in number," returned Mr. Polwheal. "Seven boys and five girls, all with different names, ages, and constitutions, which have to be borne in mind. Who'd have remembered 'em, if it had been me?"

"Someone might," said Fanny, insinuatingly, "for your sake."

"Who might that person be, Miss?" demanded Mr. Polwheal, gloomily.

Fanny coughed and turned her head aside in coy confusion. Mr. Polwheal rose, and drawing a fat shagreen letter-case from his breast-pocket, extracted therefrom a document, and spread it on the table.

"Will you oblige me, Miss," he said, "by casting your eye over this?"

Maids in a Market Garden

Fanny cast her eye over it. It was the hexagonal or six-sided rejection despatched on the previous day in answer to Mr. Polwheal's comprehensive proposal.

As the farmer's dogskin-covered thumb travelled down the row of signatures, Miss Dormer started and gave a little scream.

"Fanny Dormer! O, Mr. Polwheal!"

Her voice failed her, and she pressed her hand upon her fluttering heart.

"Anything wrong, Miss?" asked Mr. Polwheal.

"Wrong?" returned Fanny, in vibrating accents. "This signature is not mine—I never wrote it."

"Never wrote it?"

"There has been a cruel deception." She sank upon the window-seat, and buried her face in her hands. "Leave me—pray leave me. I beg—I implore——"

Emotion choked her utterance. The astonished Mr. Polwheal obeyed. As the creaking of his boots died upon the distance, Fanny jumped up. She crossed to the chimney-glass. She regarded her features critically, and nodded approval.

Maids in a Market Garden

“ You managed that very well, Fanny, my child. Not another girl in creation could have done it better—with a torn habit and a dab of mud on her nose.”

XXV

It was all the fault of Sahara. Who would have suspected, lurking beneath that almost clerical exterior, a reckless passion for sport ? A dare-devil, neck-or-nothing tendency which should induce a usually depressed and contemplative animal, whose utmost ambition might not be supposed to soar beyond the drawing of a load of vegetables to market or railway station, to take the field in emulation of real, shiny, thoroughbred hunters with a young lady on his neck, whose experience of equitation was limited to an occasional amble in the Park on a hired hack, or canter upon a country road. It was incredible.

“ I was quite enjoying myself,” complained Fanny, “ though there were one or two women at the covert-side whose general get-up and mounting made me feel as mean as a Bayswater bonnet must beside a Bond Street one. That stout red-faced woman,

Maids in a Market Garden

Lady Gertrude Tredethis—you have seen her driving a mail phaeton and pair about the country—turned out in pink, and anything more like an over-ripe tomato you cannot imagine. And the poor Usurper”—she stifled a giggle, “was making himself agreeable to her, when the pack found. The dear little red-brown cub bolted out of the cover just under Sahara’s nose, and whether it was the hounds yelping, or whether he did not like their getting mixed up with his legs, he began to behave in the most extraordinary way, and tossed me about between his ugly ears and his rat-tail like a shuttlecock. My hat went, and my hair came down, and then I found myself in the middle of the hunt, pounding up a steep ploughed field at a pace I should never have imagined. It was idle form holding the reins, I just stuck on as I could. Then a steep wall hedge rose up before me, and I gave myself up for lost, when I heard somebody call out, ‘Make for the gap.’ I could not see any gap, and Sahara was gathering himself into a kind of bunch underneath me. I felt that he had made up his mind to jump that hedge or die in the attempt, and

Maids in a Market Garden

I remember, even in that awful moment, wondering whether papa would go on paying our allowance of three hundred a year to Marjory in the event of my decease, or cut her down by one half. And then there was a fearful crash! I felt myself turning over and over in the air, and when I opened my eyes, expecting to find myself in the New Jerusalem, I was sitting in a damp furrow, safe and sound, and Sahara was nowhere to be seen. I got up then, and crawled through the gap into the next field, and——”

“ Well ? ”

“ Well, the first thing I saw was Sahara, with all the ambition taken out of him, peacefully grazing a little way off. Then I noticed The Usurper’s horse, without any saddle, careering down hill, and then The Usurper himself, lying doubled up in the ditch close by.” Fanny laughed hysterically. “ I thought he was dead until he opened his eyes. It seems that he had ridden his horse at the ditch in front of Sahara, with the idea of stopping him half-way, and then the brute blundered right into him. The saddle-girths broke, and as I slid over Sahara’s tail, he shot over his animal’s head, and——

Maids in a Market Garden

the whole thing would have been good for nothing but to laugh at, if he hadn't been kicked. As it is he has got concussion of the brain and a broken arm. Imagine the humiliation of owing all these dilapidations to Sahara. It is as bad as being run over by a bathing machine or a steam roller."

"Who would ever have expected Sahara to break out after such a fashion?"

"Did not we purchase him of Rosevear's tenant, Mr. Pengwillian? Well, I have heard the whole story of his origin from Mr. Polwheal."

"From Mr. Polwheal?" Lady Jane repeated, stiffening.

"Yes. I don't know how we should have managed without Mr. Polwheal. It was he who bandaged The Usurper's head, and fetched the labourers with the hurdle, and proposed our bringing the poor fellow here——"

"Very obliging, I am sure."

"As Trelawney is three miles further off. He told me that Sahara originally came from the Trelawney stables; that old Squire Vosper used to hunt him in his younger days; and that he had to be sold at last,

Maids in a Market Garden

being an inveterate bolter. So, after many vicissitudes, he came into the hands of Mr. Pengwillian, and, finally, into ours. Of course, the sight of a red coat reminds him of old times, poor beast ; and Mr. Polwheal says if he had had our market wagon behind him full of vegetables he would have started across country just the same."

" We shall have to get rid of him. I knew from the first," said Lady Jane, " that we made a mistake in buying him. He never came up to Maria Mulcher's standard of equine perfection."

" N—no. He certainly never did. Mr. Polwheal says, by the way, that he would be willing to take him, and give us a more suitable animal in exchange."

" Mr. Polwheal is very obliging," said Lady Jane, frostily. " When did he offer this suggestion, may I ask ? "

" This morning. I met him a little while ago—accidentally—on the Porthporra road. He was driving his gig and was kind enough to offer me a lift as far as our gate."

" But Octavia was with you ! "

" She had dropped behind, quite half a mile. When one is interested in conversation

Maids in a Market Garden

one walks slowly, and they seemed to have a good deal to say to each other."

"To—each—other." The words dropped like stalactites from the lips of Lady Jane.

"She and Mr. Carew, the rector. There they are now, close to the garden gate. He has assumed his pulpit manner, and Octavia is listening quite absorbedly."

So she was. Lady Jane could not distrust the evidence of her own eyes. Fanny went to the door, but turned, as her fashion was, to deliver a farewell bolt.

"It looks," she suggested, with a wicked twinkle of her queer absinthe-coloured eyes, "as if the Serpent had wound his way into Octavia's Adamless Eden; with the parson at the garden gate, the farmer at the threshold" (Mr. Polwheal at that very instant, very elaborately attired, and healthily florid, knocked at the front door to inquire after the invalid), "and The Usurper upstairs in the second-best bedroom, we ought to choose a new motto for the L.L.C.F.F.F.G. Don't you think so?"

Then she went away.

XXVI

ABOVE the coastguard point, on the southern side of Porthporra Haven, a blunt rock smeared with Government whitewash serves for the starting-point of a winding cliff-path, just wide enough for a fisherman and his sweetheart to walk on a Sunday afternoon or evening, hand in hand. The restless surges beat on the jagged shoal-rocks, far down below, and the brake-clothed hill sweeps up on the other hand, to bare peaks, where sure-footed sheep are nibbling the short salt grasses. A lovely, lonely walk ; loveliest at sunset, when a gentle breeze blows, shepherding flocks of red cloudlets home to their fold in the purple-barred western sky.

Joan Melhuish and Huey Lenine walked on the cliff-path as they had done many times. But on this Saturday evening they did not go hand-in-hand in simple Arcadian fashion. And when they sat down to rest and look out at the familiar and yet ever-

Maids in a Market Garden

changing pageant of sky and sea, they did not lean shoulder to shoulder, or touch cheek with cheek, as confident sweethearts are used to do.

Joan's grey eyes were downcast, her olive cheeks were paler than their wont. There were drooping lines about her firm lips that told of watching and weariness—perhaps of tears. She had volunteered to sit up in Mr. Vosper's sick room on the night before. Such a night will leave its traces even on a young cheek. But she certainly had not been crying over the young squire, whose recovery seemed a certain thing. The trouble lay nearer to her heart.

She sat upon a natural seat of grey, lichen-spangled rock, where the cliff-way swerved downwards to merge in the unbroken fallows, flushed with the last poppies of the year, that swept round the curve of a lovely, lonely bay. A grey old church, sitting amongst the tombstones of forgotten generations, lifted its half-ruined spire towards the evening star, sheep-bells tinkled faintly from the distant pastures.

"Tes pratty, sure," said Huey Lenine, with a sigh.

Maid in a Market Garden

" You'm seed it often enough, lad, t' know that," Joan responded, gravely.

" Ay. But tes like as if a curtain had be'n hangin' afore sky an' sea an' all together, ever sin' aw were borned. An' niver lifted, lass—niver lifted until now."

" Niver till now ? "

" Naw. Th' scales ha' fallen from ma eyes, like as et happened to th' man i' Scripture. ' Aw ha' be'n blind, but now aw can see.' Somehow like that th' words run, don't em ? "

" M'appen th' man wer' happier blind, than open eyed."

" M'appen so, but aw should doubt it." He swept out his right arm with a free gesture, pointing to the sunset sky, the opal sea, the grey spire rising from the tombstone-dotted church-hay, the grey sands shelving to the ripples. " A man—a gentleman—writ a song about Tarrand Sands there. Aw read it i' a book—en aw cud ha' laughed at him for a fule for stringen a pa'cel o' fine rhymin' words together, en all to do wi' a place aw'd knawed all ma life. But aw know now who was th' fule.

Maids in a Market Garden

' Th' cliffs wer' crowned wi' th' purple vetches,
Th' rabbits basked on th' warm grey beaches,
Shrill gulls wer' cryin' along the reaches
O' Tarrand Sands !

Nigh on^{by} wher' th' streamlet presses
Down to th' sea between banks o' cresses,
Aw stood fast locked i' my love's embraces
On Tarrand Sands !'

Tes pratty—pratty ! Aw might make a
tune t' bear th' words if aw'd th' ould fiddle
i' ma hand. Yet once aw couldn' see a
pennord o' sense i' them, or th' man es made
them. His eyes wer' oppen, 'ee see, while
mine wer' shut."

Joan turned her grave glance upon him.
Her bosom heaved beneath the folds of the
shawl, which had fallen from her head, the
breeze stirred the strong tendrils of silken
black that wandered about her white neck
and her calm forehead as she said :

" Ther's a tale telling of a blind man—
—aw read it the other day—a man that
had been blind all th' life of him, an' niver
even looked o' th' face o' th' woman that
loved him. For a woman loved him, an' they
wer' to be married one day—them as wer'
wedded already i' th' eyes o' th' Almighty.

Maids in a Market Garden

But before that day came, came a great eye-doctor to th' village wher' they lived, en th' woman persuaded th' blind man t' go t' him. 'M'appen,' her sayth, 'ther' may be hope. Th' man went, en come back wi' th' news that ther' wer' hope. Life t' him, that news. Death—and worse than death—t' she."

"Why?"

"Because her wer' coarse-favoured en plain, wi' hands roughened wi' labour, done for love o' him, en hair whitened wi' trouble, borne for his dear sake. Her was ill-feared he would love her no more when he once saw her. But her said not one word against th' operation. An' when th' sharp knife cut its way into th' darkness, an' th' weary days o' waitin' were over, the first face him seed were hers. An' him turned from she in disgust. 'Niver 'ee try for t' hide it,' her said, 'aw be not what you'm expectin' and aw know 't full well. An' 'twere shame to hold 'ee to th' ould promise, you'm gin me under a mistake. So think 'ee no more about 'n,' her said. En her took what little her had an went away. Him said no word t' stop her, an' aw din't say as him wer'

Maids in a Market Garden

altogether in the wrong. M'appen his new eyes saw less clearly than his heart had done—ther' be no tellin'. But her—th' woman as loved him so dear—her wer' i' the right. Her wer' i' th' right"—her voice rose—"An that brings me t' what aw wer' wishin' t' say to 'ee, Huey Lenine. Take back th' promise 'ee made me in th' ould days—th' days when 'ee wer blind. You'm no need to chafe at the cable longer, for 'tis cut, an' you'm a free man from this day out."

"Joan!"

"Aw want no words. Us can read each other's faces, though m'appen our hearts are shut against each other. I' th' darkness what seemed to 'ee a pretty face, is a poor one, now that th' light, th' new light shows it at its worst. Aw'm not blamin' th' light or thee, th' Lord knows. Ther' be no bitterness in my heart towards 'ee or *her*. 'Tis wonderfully quiet." She held her hand out to him, and, rising, drew her common shawl about her noble figure, and turned homewards, with a last look at the incarnadined splendours of the sky. "Naw, lad," as Lenine made a motion to accompany her, "ther' mun be no more walkin' together

Maids in a Market Garden

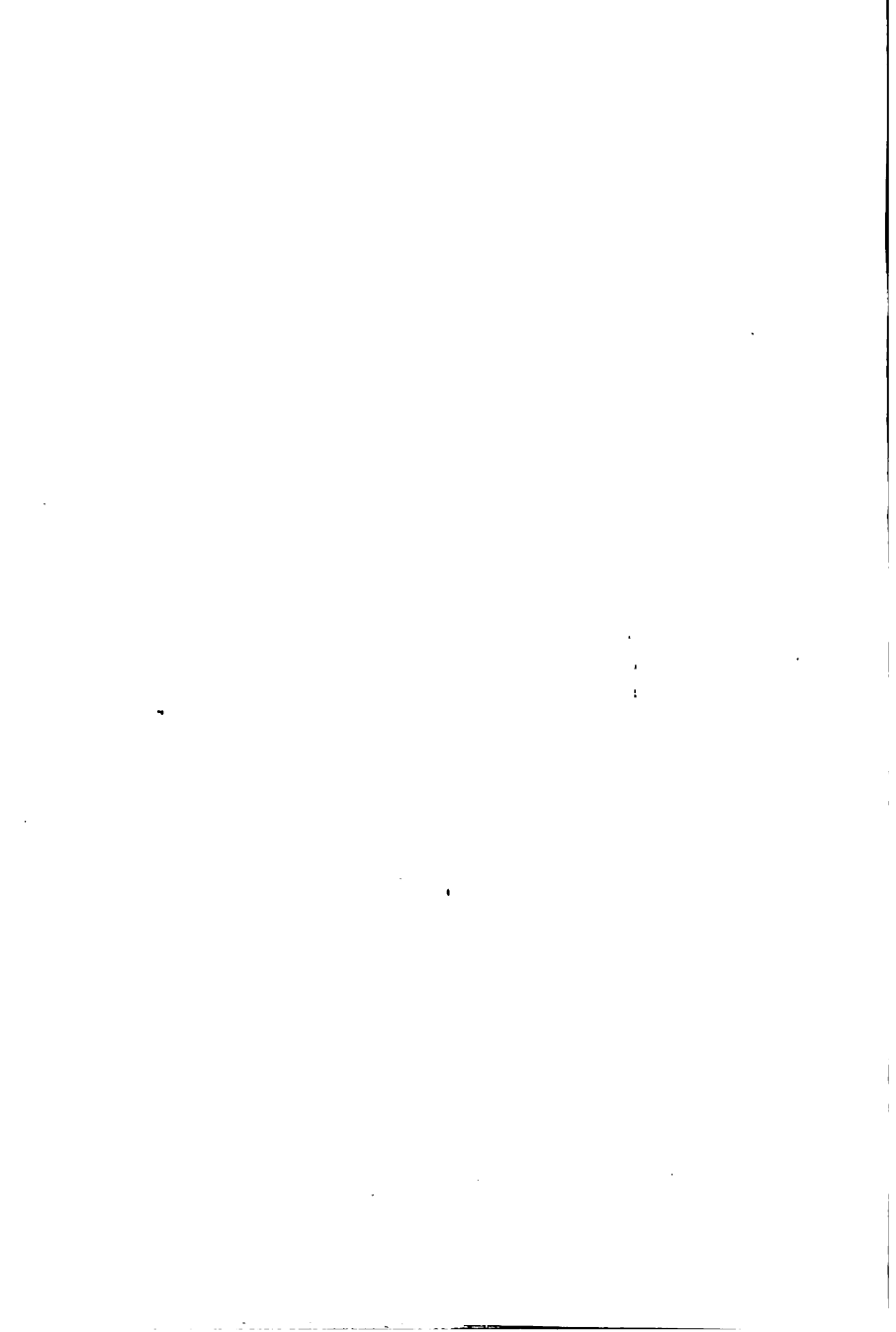
after this. Folks shall know 'tis aw over between 'ee and Joan, an' wi' no fault on either side to blame. Good-night t'ee."

Her hand dropped from his. She had gone from him before he could speak.

He looked up with a sailor's instinct at the sky, as the wind shifted its quarter to the north-east, and a pale lambent moon soared into view above the rugged crest of the hill. So pale, so pure, so infinitely remote—some subtle analogy between that distant gleaming orb and another existing as far beyond the radius of yearning thoughts and wild aspirations, may have touched some quivering chord in the hot, wild heart to pain past bearing. Else why did he throw himself face downwards on the heather and weep such secret, scalding, bitter tears?



“NAW, LAD, THER’ MUN BE NO MORE WALKIN’ TOGETHER AFTER
THIS.” p. 191.



XXVII

"I SHOULD be glad to know," Lady Jane said to the surgeon, "your candid opinion of Mr. Vosper."

Mr. Bevill looked at the anxious lady reassuringly out of a pair of handsome brown eyes.

"I think, madam," he returned, "that the patient is going on"—he hesitated—"as well as can be expected."

The sentence sounded familiar in the ears of Lady Jane, and yet it failed to reassure her.

"Mr. Curnow Vosper has suffered severe injuries to the head," she said. "He has only recently returned to consciousness after a protracted period of insensibility. It is natural, perhaps—that his mind should wander—that he should talk incoherently at times——"

Mr. Bevill interrupted the anxious lady.

"Mr. Curnow Vosper is perfectly clear in

Maids in a Market Garden

his mind. He exhibits not the slightest symptom of mental disturbance. Pray accept my professional assurance on that point."

"Excuse me a moment——"

Lady Jane rang the bell, and despatched Joan Melhuish with a message, requesting Miss Trelawney to step into the parlour. Miss Trelawney appeared, rather paler than her wont.

"But a lovely girl, for all that," said the appreciative surgeon to himself. "That red-gold hair and those wonderful tawny eyes are enough to make a man commit an idiotcy or two. Poor old Curny!"

"You are, I believe, an old acquaintance of Mr. Vosper's?" hazarded Lady Jane.

"We were schoolfellows," responded the handsome surgeon, "and our boyish friendship has not lessened with years. I happened very fortunately to be in the neighbourhood when this accident occurred. In fact, my yacht—only a small affair, but quite commodious enough for a single man—lies anchored in Porthporra Harbour, and in promptly fetching me to his master's bedside—I was engaged to dine with my poor friend on the very night of the accident—

Maids in a Market Garden

the groom showed a great deal of commendable intelligence, for I don't disguise from you, ladies, that had Mr. Curnow fallen into the hands of one of these local butchers, his state would have been the less gracious to-day."

"My dear Rosevear!"—Lady Jane turned to Miss Trelawney—"Mr. Bevill assures me positively that Mr. Vosper is not delirious!"

"Pulse absolutely normal," said Mr. Bevill, "and it stands to reason that without fever there can—in a sane subject—be no delirium."

"Then how?"—Miss Trelawney clasped her hands—"how are his wanderings to be accounted for! His hallucinations?"

"Hallucinations? Of what nature?"

"Of a most extraordinary nature." Rosevear crimsoned to the very temples, and then grew pale. "With—I must speak precisely—with regard to myself. He will take his medicine from no other hand than mine——"

"Incredible!" the young surgeon muttered, with twitching lips.

"And, although I had previously seen Mr. Vosper but twice, and our communication has been limited to a dozen words or so, he—it is very sad, poor fellow!" said Rosevear,

Maids in a Market Garden

pityingly—"he is possessed by the conviction that I have been carrying on a romantic flirtation with him. For weeks past——"

"My dear child!" burst out Lady Jane.

"He has persisted in this assertion ever since he regained consciousness," continued Miss Trelawney, "and found me in attendance at his bedside. I would have withdrawn myself—avoided him—but that——"

"But such a proceeding on your part would have probably been attended with an increase of unfavourable symptoms," said the young surgeon. "Yes, yes. Certainly. I confess your revelation has surprised me, Miss Trelawney." He looked very hard at Rosevear. "For the meanwhile there is nothing to be done but to humour the patient, and wait. Anything done precipitately is done wrongly in a case of this description."

He shook hands with the ladies, and went away. As he got on the horse, which was being held by one of the Trelawney grooms at the garden gate, he shook his head reflectively.

"A most unexpected move on the part of the fair one. Quite masterly. I should never have suspected that to be an artful

Maids in a Market Garden

girl. Yet——” He shook his head again. “Poor old Curny. Pity he didn’t pitch his affections on somebody else ; Miss Trelawney, with all her tawny beauties, is less taking than the other one—the languid, Oriental beauty, Marjory Dormer. Pretty name, Marjory Dormer. She consulted me about her health yesterday under the barberry tree in the garden, and I was very nearly led into asking her advice with regard to the state of my own heart. Glad, on the whole, I didn’t. There is enough of artfulness in Miss Trelawney to leaven the whole community. Oh, Eve, Eve ! ”

The reader, better informed than Mr. Philip Bevill, will be led to exclaim, “Oh, Fanny, Fanny ! ” Truly the Machiavellian arts of that young person were at the bottom of Mr. Vosper’s extraordinary hallucination, Lady Jane’s bewilderment, and Mr. Bevill’s unfavourable opinion of Rosevear Trelawney.

XXVIII

“BE ’ee goin’ t’ th’ love-feast, cheild, th’night? Eh, dear, but her ’ve clane forgot aw about ’t? En aw mid sure Huey wid be lukin’ in afore this, en nayther bone nor feather o’ he have aw seed. Though brother Oliver down t’ th’ mill had a glimpse of un yisterday, an him zaid th’ lad did luk th’ picture o’ ill-luck, en him wer’ misdoubtin’ ’at him an Joan had fell out, though aw called him a vull for’s pains.”

“Uncle Job were right, Aunt ’Sanna, right i’ a way. Huey an’ me us ha’—not fallen out—but come to an understanding. Clear and plain. From this out us are friends—true friends, wi’ no thought o’ marriage between us.”

“Ma sweet sensis! En ’ee en him sweet-arts from th’ cradle. Well, well, to think o’ that!”

“Please don’t ’ee say no more!” Joan entreated, with a sharp accent of pain.

Maids in a Market Garden

"Aw'll hould ma tongue, cheild, for t' please 'ee. But my kind 'art, such a turn as 'ee 've give ma. It's fair turned ma blid t' watter, so it has."

Thus Aunt Hosanna mourned the breakage of her niece's love-bubble. It was with an elongated countenance that she presented herself before Lady Jane, later on, to solicit a holiday for the afternoon.

"A love-feast at the Porthporra chapel," cried Fanny Dormer, curiously. "What is a love-feast? Buns and tea and marmalade—and hymns to follow? Do you know?"—she turned coaxingly to Lady Jane—"I should like of all things to go."

"'Ee mite du worsen," said Aunt Hosanna, who regarded Fanny with secret disapprobation. "Aw 've zeed many a worldly-minded young wumman browt t' th' Footstool at a love-feast. 'Twill be th' singin' draws zum at th' beginnin'—our men-folk du sing bravely—or else th' fleshpots; or else vanity—just t' be lukin' at each other's gownds. But when one en another gets up tellin' fowk ther experiences, en th' strong prayers go up en th' heavenly grace comin' pourin' down, 'tis odds if some di'n't find conviction

Maids in a Market Garden

en take a blessin' away, even if 'em loses it o' th' way home."

"The singing—is it really so nice?" pursued Fanny.

"Ay, it is that. Our Joan, her be a choir-member. En Huey, him du play i' th' orchestra——"

Aunt 'Sanna broke off and retired hastily. But the idea of going to the chapel that evening had firmly fixed itself in Fanny's mind.

"It will be a relaxation in a sort of a way. A new experience—and new experiences are always worth having. Come, Lady Jane, and you, Clarrikins, and Octavia."

"I hardly think the Rector would approve," began Octavia.

"What?" shrieked Fanny; and Octavia's ordinarily composed countenance became suffused with red. She agreed to come quite hastily, and ventured no more on the subject of the Rector's pastoral prejudices.

"And Marjory and Rosevear will stay behind and look after The Usurper," went on Fanny.

"Do you think——?" hesitated Lady Jane.

"There is safety in numbers. And Mrs.

Maids in a Market Garden

Job from the Mill is coming up to look after things in general while Aunt Hosanna and Joan are away. Besides, we shall not start until after tea." Fanny pleaded, and Lady Jane yielded at last.

XXIX

THE mighty piles of cake and slabs of bread-and-butter which had adorned the setting forth of the trestle-tables, were concealed from view by the time the Killigarth contingent arrived upon the scene of godly revel ; the crumbs had been swept up, the Britannia-metal teapots piled in stacks in the corners, the peacefully-inclined babies had been hushed to sleep, and the fretfully-inclined ones carried home to bed. The chapel—a long, low building, lighted by windows of plain glass, and stained as to the plaster walls, and composition pillars, of a cheerful yellow, picked out with chocolate—was thronged with fishermen, farmers, and their wives in gala attire. Upon the rostrum, inside a kind of varnished packing case, sat several prosperous-looking persons attired in ministerial sable. Three of these conferred earnestly together over a volume of

Maids in a Market Garden

Wesley's Hymns, while a fourth, enervated with tea and exhausted by much previous exhortation, slumbered in a corner.

Lady Jane and her companions glided into an empty pew. Looking about them they descried the familiar faces of Aunt 'Sanna and her brother the miller, of Joan Melhuish —Joan's olive face was unusually pale and pinched of late, and her grey eyes looked out upon the world with a sternness usually foreign to their regard. The change manifest in her was visible in Huey Lenine. As Clara Currey's shy glance sought the young fisherman out and rested on him, he looked up and encountered it, and the hot blood surged visibly to his brown temples and the roots of his yellow curls. The blue eyes and the soft hazel ones flashed into each other for one eager moment and then parted, as Huey dropped his head moodily upon his breast again.

Late people kept dropping in one by one, the chapel was becoming crowded. As a draught of unusual volume saluted the back of Lady Jane's neck, she turned her head an instant to confront the burly personality of Mr. Polwheal, who occupied a seat behind

Maids in a Market Garden

her. In not altogether gratified surprise the daughter of the Earl of Llwdllm turned her gaze upon the features of Miss Fanny Dormer. Those features wore an air of Perdita-like innocence. Lady Jane dismissed the suspicion her magnanimous mind had for one instant harboured, as an unworthy one.

The proceedings began with a hymn. A harmonium, a violoncello, and a clarinet supplied the accompaniment to the robust and tuneful voices of the choir. It was singing of an untutored kind but of artistic quality. Singing that made the heart throb quicker and brought unaccountable tears into the eyes. Singing that had the rhythm of the salt waves, the harmony and power of the sea winds, in it. That was all. A prayer was next put up by one of the ministers. It was a long petition, and a strong one, and the clenched hands, swollen forehead-veins and crimson face of the intercessor betokened his earnestness. And then a brother (from Yorkshire, evidently) rose to deliver an address. He was a broad-shouldered, thickset, rosy-cheeked fellow, with a pleasant voice and the instincts of a

Maids in a Market Garden

comedian, as many a giggle and guffaw on the part of his hearers testified.

“My brothers an’ sisters,” he began. “Oor respectid fren’ Broother Davis” (applause on the part of the congregation) “draw’d me o’ one side t’night afore meet-in’ ” (distinct discomfort on the part of Brother Davis) “to gie me wot he corled a warnin’. A warnin’. Says he, ‘Whatever ye du, dunnot let oor chapel fowk know that ye be nowt but an owd convartid collier. ’T’would set ’em agin ye fra’ the start. Them words fra’ Broother Davis med up my mind. Collier I be, collier I will always be, tak’ me or leave me. ’Twas doon i’ th’ black coal-pits thot the Light first found me, ’twas forth fra’ them I came wi’ my mind set o’ the ministry o’ the Gospel. Him or her as is tew prood to hear my words, better goo owt o’ th’ chapel till I ha’ said my say.” No one stirred. “’Tis borne in upo’ me to testify to-night to the Power thot made an’ saved me, thot makes an’ saves other sinners ivera day. Th’ stronger th’ fortress taken th’ greater th’ glory ; th’ blacker th’ sinner th’ greater th’ credit to Him that meks him clean.” (A sob from

Maids in a Market Garden

a woman.) “ Weel, as to this Power an’ the way of its workin’ I could tell ye many things. But theer be little time, an’ I mun mek th’ most of ’t. Down i’ th’ owd home country amongst th’ coal-pits wheer ’twer my privilege to live an’ labour, there wer’ an’ owd mahn as wer’ as unregenerate a sinner as iver I did see. Gamin’, drinkin’, an’ cock fightin’—nowt i’ th’ way of divilment but came easy t’ him, and when th’ liquor had gotten fair howd o’ him he wer’ like a mad-man, as his poor owd wife shoo know’d t’ shoo’s cost. Wun night as I wer’ preachin’ from a barril I seed this owd sinner, Dicky they ca’d him, standin’ by. An’ I leans ower an’ taps him o’ th’ shouther, an’ says i’ my discourse, ‘ Friend, coom up hither.’ He says, ‘ I’m dom’d if I dew.’ ‘ Dom’d yo’ will be,’ I says, ‘ if yo’ dinna, yo’ grut sinner. Better save yo’r soul before ’tis tew late!’ Powerful words I spoke thot night, an’ though he went hoam unconverted, i’ th’ middle o’ thot night he found th’ Lord. Th’ mornin’ found him a new mahn.”

“ Hallelujah! ” from a hearer.

“ A changed mahn. He tow’d th’ neighbors, an’ he tow’d his wife, an’ says shoo,

Maids in a Market Garden

‘A professin’ Christian mahn’t keep a fightin’ cock. Yo’d best sell th’ bird for whatever ‘twill fetch!’ An’ he wint owt an’ browt in th’ bird under his arm. ‘Sithee,’ says he, ‘I’ll show yo’ what I be goin’ tew dew with ‘n.’ Ck!” (expressive pantomime on the part of the preacher). “He wrung its neck—by th’ power o’ th’ Lord. An’ if th’ power o’ th’ Lord can mek a Yorkshire collier wring th’ neck o’ his pet fightin’ cock, mah friends, th’ power o’ th’ Lord can asy move mountains an’ raise th’ dead.”

The Yorkshireman sat down, wiping his brow. A white-haired minister rose to speak, the soft drawl of the local district contrasting strongly with the rugged accents of the previous preacher.

“Ma friends, young an’ ould, zum o’ whume I ha’ played wi’ en boyhood, others es aw ha’ dandled as babes upon ma knee, aw ha’ somethin’ to confess before ‘ee all this night—somethin’ as lay heavy on ma mind, so that aw cannot stand up afore ‘ee wi’ a clear conscience, en a smooth brow, till aw ha’ med a clane breast o’ th’ trouble en th’ zin. What be ma zin, neighbours? Hear ma. I ha’ tampered wi’ my soul. I’m

Maids in a Market Garden

a minister o' th' Gospel. Aw ha' played th' hypocrite—th' self-deceiver " (the steady old voice faltered), " wi' ma Maker an' myself. 'Twas this way. Aw wer' drivin' ma sheep en ma bullocks home from th' pasture no later than yisterday evenin'. En es aw walked behind th' beasts aw wer' plannin' th' discourse i' ma mind es aw wer' tew deliver tew-day. But aw wer' sore troubled. For th' sheep ran one way en th' bullocks anuther, en wer' out o' all control. En aw wer' sore tempted t' swear. May th' Lord forgive ma ! "

" Dear, dear ! " groaned the hearers.

" Us be weak mortals, in't us ? But aw resisted th' temptation."

" Praise Him ! "

" Not i' th' right way, Brother Oliver. Aw wriggled out o' th' enemy's path instid o' facin' he bouldly. 'Twer' like this. As my tongue wer' rollin' round the end o' a wicked word, a cart an' horse came along, an' th' man as walked beside th' horse him wer' a stranger—not o' this parish. En aw asked o' he wher' him comin' from ? ' From Megavissey,' him sayth. Now us all du know es th' Megavissey fowk be grate swearers."

Maids in a Market Garden

“ Ay, du us ! ”

“ So th’ Enemy minded me, an’ put th’ words into ma mouth, an’ aw med ma bargain wi’ th’ Megavissey man this fashion : Aw wer’ t’ give he a shillin’, an’ he wer’ t’ do th’ swearin’ as aw dare not do. ‘ For your soul it be well seasoned,’ aw says to un ; ‘ an’ will stand singein’, while mine ’t be as tender as a biled owl.’ En him tuke th’ shillin’, en sweareth as brimstone an oath as iver aw heerd, en wint on his way. En aw did feel mightily relieved. But after, that same night, i’ th’ quiet o’ ma chamber, shame came on ma, an’ Repentance—hot an’ heavy. Aw had paltered wi’ th’ Master as bin so trew t’ ma ; aw had soiled ma own soul, en plunged th’ soul o’ that poor sinner from Megavissey deeper into the Pit. Fallen fro’ Grace, aw stand t’ night before ’ee all, th’ ashes on ma white hairs—th’ coals o’ fire gnawin’ at ma heart—a humbled man.”

Sobs broke out amongst the listeners, even Lady Jane felt a sympathetic tightness at the throat, as the old minister bade his people pray for him, and they prayed both fervently and loudly.

XXX

THE old minister remained on his knees with his face hidden in his knotted, labour-scarred hands. Suddenly he started up, his face transfigured, his white locks radiating from his face as though blown backwards by some wind of miraculous sending. He cried out hysterically :

“ It ha’ come—it ha’ come ! Fallen from heaven, like th’ dew on parchin’ earth ! Forgiveness—pardon, sinkin’ into ma hard heart en softenin’ it, cleansin’ an’ purifyin’ ma sin-stained soul. Oh, if heer t’ night ther’ be any fowk ’at be sore burdened in sin, let en take courage. If there be any weighed down in grief an’ dole as needin’ comfort, let en know as th’ comfort be close at hand. Th’ Man o’ Sorrows is wi’ us to-night, heer i’ this lattle place. Let us wrestle wi’ Him as Jacob did wi’ th’ angel, for virtue is in His garments t’ cleanse an’

Maids in a Market Garden

t' heal. Come up. Don't 'ee delay. Come to th' Mercy seat—confess, and be forgiven. For He is faithful—faithful, an' of many marcies. Come ! ”

There was a stir among the sobbing women. One got up—it was Joan Melhuish—and went forward, and knelt at the platform rail. She was weeping. The old minister stretched trembling hands above her bowed head, and called on others to follow her example. Aunt Hosanna and Miller Job followed her. The excitement was becoming intense, when, with a kind of rush, a broad-shouldered, manly figure, with yellow curls above the neat blue guernsey, made its way through the throng, and joined the penitents. Ejaculations, cries, and sobs broke out on every side.

“ Clara ! ” whispered Octavia. “ My child, what is it ? ”

But Clara did not hear. She had risen to her feet, with white face and gleaming eyes. She was being drawn from her companions as if by some irresistible influence, when Octavia caught her in her arms, and passed her hands before her eyes. Then she broke into hysterical weeping, and Miss Wall

Maids in a Market Garden

led her away into the open air. The others followed.

"If I had only known," remarked Lady Jane, emphatically, "that sensitive child should never have been subjected to such an experience."

She made her remark to empty air. Fanny Dormer was not, as she had expected, by her side. She came running up as Lady Jane halted, out of breath, but unabashed as ever.

"Mr. Polwheal stopp'd me to inquire after Mr. Vosper's health," she explained. "He is a tenant of his, and it is natural that he should take an interest in him. Don't you think so?"

Lady Jane gave a kind of snort. They had arrived at the Killigarth garden gate, and as they crossed the little bridge in the gathering darkness, and climbed the garden path, she did not make any further remark. Octavia and Clara had passed into the house before them; Rosevear alone met them on the threshold.

"Gracious!" cried Fanny, in the high accents of surprise. "How pale you look! What has happened?"

Maid in a Market Garden

Something must have happened.

Something had happened. It was quite clear, even to Lady Jane, that Miss Trelawney was out of temper. Never had she seen a look upon Rosevear's face at all resembling the look with which she now favoured Fanny ; never had she seen that usually unabashed young person quail under any human glance as she now quailed under the fire of those indignant eyes.

Lady Jane asked a question. She said, as they followed Miss Trelawney into the long parlour, where supper was already laid, and fire and candles burned cheerily, " Has anything happened to Mr. Vosper ? "

Rosevear Trelawney answered, " Mr. Vosper is not here. He has left the house."

" Left the house ! and upon his first day of convalescence ? " cried Lady Jane. " What can be the reason for such an imprudent proceeding ? "

Rosevear answered coldly and contemptuously :

" Don't ask me, Lady Jane. Miss Fanny Dormer will be able to supply you with the required information."

Again she pierced the wincing Fanny with

Maids in a Market Garden

the lightning of her eye, but by this time Fanny had picked up a little, and was able to retaliate.

"It's all very well to glare at me," she protested. "What have I done that is so dreadful, I should like to know?"

"You shall hear," said Rosevear, sternly. "Lady Jane, as an honourable woman, I ask you what is your opinion of the woman who writes letters—encourages addresses—in another's name; who receives presents, still personating that other woman?"

"They were only bouquets," expostulated Fanny, "and I buried them all under the gooseberry bushes by the arbour. The whole thing was pure philanthropy—on my part."

"Pure philanthropy!" Rosevear repeated, scornfully.

"For Heaven's sake," cried the agitated Lady Jane, "explain!"

"You, with Octavia, Clara, and this philanthropic female forger," said Rosevear, bitterly, "went to Porthporra Wesleyan Chapel this evening. I and Marjory stayed at home. Mr. Bevill called to see his patient an hour or two later, and when he came downstairs, as it was growing dark, Marjory

Maids in a Market Garden

volunteered to accompany him with the cellar lantern as far as the garden bridge. She did not return for a considerable time."

"Tch!" Fanny giggled. Rosevear froze the erring girl with another look, and continued:

"I sat here in the window with my work. I was making a—a new sling for the arm of the—patient upstairs——"

Fanny giggled again.

"When the door opened," Miss Trelawney went on, ignoring the offender, "and Mr. Vosper appeared, fully dressed."

"Well, it isn't likely——" Fanny began.

"I expostulated with him upon the rashness of his action," said Rosevear, pointedly addressing Lady Jane. "He—he said that my withdrawal of my—my attendance on him had caused him uneasiness. He was afraid, he said, that he had offended me. And then he went on," continued Rosevear with gleaming eyes, "to make love to me. And when I forbade him even to address me in such terms again, he repeated that in past days I had encouraged him. Given him—him! REASON TO HOPE!"

"Gracious!" cried Lady Jane.

Maids in a Market Garden

"He said—he dared to aver," cried Rosevear, "that he had proof—in my own handwriting, that I had not at one time regarded him with the contempt and aversion I now expressed. And when I challenged him to produce any such letter or letters—he brought out a packet of papers—his pocket was bursting with them, in fact. Notes, coquetish, encouraging, even affectionate"—she shuddered—"addressed to him, signed with my initials, and written by Miss Fanny Dormer. See for yourself." She tossed them into Lady Jane's lap. "You recognise the handwriting, as I did? You would have done and said in my place what I——?" She panted. "He is gone. Mr. Vosper is, at least, a gentleman. It was inadvisable that he should remain here. The Mill wagonette took him back to Trelawney. His property shall be sent after him tomorrow. He may forget what has happened; but for me, who have been shamed, degraded—insulted, there is no forgetfulness."

Lady Jane rose majestically. She turned to Fanny.

"Oh, I am a reprehensible person, I know that very well," said the culprit, plucking

Maids in a Market Garden

up courage. "I have done very wrong and I suppose I ought to be repentant, but I am not. Not a bit. I'm only vexed that everything has not turned out as I intended. I ought to have told The Usurper the truth, and made him burn the papers, and then he could have begun all over again. I was sorry for him, yes, sorry for him, so rich as he is, so good-looking, and so much in love with you. It was wicked waste of an opportunity another girl would have jumped at when you turned up your nose at him. And so I thought I would give the poor thing a little hope to live on until something better panned out, as Americans say. Something better did pan out. He was lucky enough to get smashed, and I was kind enough to bring him here to be mended, and you were Christian enough to look after him, nurse him, and be in a general way his guide, philosopher, and friend." She giggled again. "The serpent had fairly wriggled himself into our Paradise in defiance of Octavia and the Rules. And what has been the result? Marjory has curled her hair and regularly got up to breakfast. Lady Jane has dawned on us in garments of unaccustomed splendour.

Maids in a Market Garden

I have powdered my nose regularly, and pulled in my waist ; even Octavia has blossomed into frills and fal-lals. And why ? **BECAUSE THERE WAS A MAN IN THE HOUSE.**" She slapped the table. "A real live man—and in our hearts we were glad of it. Women are built that way, and it is too late to alter them. They droop—as we have drooped—without the stimulus of Man's society ; they perk up, as we have perked up, when the iron-handed oppressor is in the neighbourhood. I may be coarse," said Fanny, defiantly, "but I am not a humbug. You may be angry with me now, Rosevear, and I suppose I deserve it, but you'll forgive me one of these days—**WHEN YOU MARRY MR. VOSPER.**"

She walked out of the room defiantly and banged the door upon Lady Jane's indignant consternation and Rosevear's speechless wrath.

XXXI

THE atmosphere had the cold bright crispness of November, the chrysanthemums and dahlias were past their prime. The hardy yellow roses yet lingered on though the hedge-fruit ripened beside them. More than one fierce south-westerly gale had kept the fishing boats close prisoners in Porthporra Haven, and driven the complaining seagulls inland to dispute the spoil of the freshly turned fallows with starlings, rooks, and jays. Life at Killigarth went on soberly. In the absence of Rosevear Trelawney, who had gone on a visit to friends in town, the L.L.C.F.F.F.G. felt how much her gay light-heartedness had contributed to the common stock of cheer. Marjory Dormer had also taken wing. Little Clara's quiet face was missing from its accustomed corner by the hearth. The girl's health had failed strangely of late, and Lady Jane Pegram, in the hope that change of air might work the desired

Maids in a Market Garden

alteration for the better, had taken her to Llwdllm under her own fostering wing. The latest bulletin from Wales recorded a decided improvement.

"And a good thing too," said Fanny Dormer, throwing Lady Jane's letter back to Octavia Wall. "The child seemed dwindling away before one's eyes, like the people in 'The Hunting of the Snark,' who happened to come across a Boojum.

' But oh, beamish nephew, beware of the day,
If the Snark prove a Boojum—for then
You will softly and suddenly vanish away,
And never be heard of again ! '

Clarrikins will come home as bright as a button."

"Little good that will be if the thing is to begin all over again!" remarked Miss Wall. Her brow was knitted and her spectacles looked less bright than usual.

"You talk in parables," said Fanny, "and life is not long enough to spend in digging for meanings. You speak, and have spoken all along, as if Clara had been subjected to some mysterious persecution."

Octavia at no other time would have felt inclined to select Fanny for a confidante.

Maids in a Market Garden

But they had spent a fortnight *tête-à-tête*, the duet being only occasionally converted into a trio by the addition of the profound bass boasted by Mr. Polwheal, or the clerically-pitched baritone of the Rector, Mr. Carew. And, if adversity brings us into contact with strange bed-fellows, solitude will induce us to open our hearts to the most unlikely confidants. Octavia opened hers, thenceforth ; imparted to Fanny the secret of the mysterious visitation to which Clara had been subjected, and related Rosevear's legend of the Lame Lady.

"A—real—ghost!" said Fanny, slowly. "Promenading the premises night after night ; and I have never seen her. None of you have seen her—except Clara. Has nobody watched? You, Octavia, with your sturdy common-sense, your contempt of superstitions, your absolute disbelief in rapping spirits and juggling Mahatmas, surely you have watched!"

"I! No. I have harboured the intention of doing so," explained Octavia, "on more occasions than one, but something has always interfered. For one thing, there have been the books of the Community which Lady

Maids in a Market Garden

Jane confided to my care on leaving. For another, the nights are chilly, and——”

Fanny giggled.

“ But, as it appears absolutely necessary that something should be done before Clara returns,” Octavia continued, “ I have spoken to Mr. Carew ——”

“ To the Rector ? ”

“ ——on the subject. And he has proposed to——in short, he has deemed it advisable to take certain steps——”

Octavia came to a dead stop. Fanny rose to her feet, and regarded Miss Wall with a broad stare of curiosity. Under the scrutiny, Octavia’s naturally pale complexion assumed a rosy tinge.

“ Certain steps ? ” Fanny whistled——sifflation was an accomplishment of hers which Lady Jane profoundly disapproved of. “ Do you——as a young female person living in the nineteenth century——actually mean that the Rector is going to attempt to lay, or exorcise, this apparition. ? ”

“ Mr. Carew’s services have often been solicited for the same purpose. Perhaps you are not aware that in the ancient Rubric——”

“ Mercy on me ! Octavia quoting

Maids in a Market Garden

rubrics!" Fanny elevated her hands and eyebrows.

"Mediaeval—Venerable Bede—Forms of Exorcism—unclean spirits—mentioned—Holy Writ," Octavia continued, rather incoherently.

"Have a little pity. And when does His Holiness—I mean the Reverend Lemuel Carew—intend, with bell, book, and candle asperges, holy water, and all the rest of the paraphernalia, to put an end to the tricks and manners of this hobbling sprite?"

"He was good enough to promise to come to-night."

"Good. You, of course, intend to be present at the ceremony. So do I. You will have His Reverence at hand to cling to in case the Lame Lady should prove contumacious. But who is there to look after me? Unless Mr. Polwheal should happen to drop in! Admirable idea. I will send a little note up to Peniel, inviting its master to come and bring a bludgeon. Pity the community are so scattered. We might have issued cards to the county for an Esoteric At Home. 'A Ghost will be Laid in the Course of the Evening by the Reverend

Maids in a Market Garden

L. Carew.' That would look nice in copper-plate characters in the corner of the document."

Thus Fanny mocked. But Octavia's purpose was settled, her determination not to be lightly shaken. Fanny also adhered to her announced course of action. The shades of evening fell, and brought with them both the Rev. Lemuel Carew and Mr. Joshua Polwheal.

XXXII

"I HOPE you can bear being pinched," said Miss Fanny Dormer, "because Mr. Carew particularly wishes that nobody should speak or scream, and one must give vent to one's feelings somehow, in moments of great tension."

"To be pinched by you, Miss," said Mr. Polwheal, upon whose stout, grey frieze-covered arm the fair fingers of Miss Fanny were confidently resting, "could not be regarded as otherwise than a privilege."

It was a dark, damp evening, and the path upon which they walked was ankle-deep in the fallen leaves of the orchard-trees. There was no wind to speak of, and the moon was trying to shine through a veil of foggy vapours.

"Octavia and the Reverend are nowhere to be seen."

"They are—considerably ahead of us," said Mr. Polwheal, "and being dressed in

Maids in a Market Garden

dark colours are not to be easily distinguished. We are to all intents and purposes as much alone as if we were in—Central Africa, for instance, surrounded by furious tribes of Baobabs and other aborigines whose names are unpleasant to pronounce and difficult to remember.”

“I rather think,” corrected Fanny, “that a Baobab is a kind of tree.”

Mr. Polwheal sighed with a kind of melancholy admiration. “You have a good memory, Miss Dormer,” he said. “Mine, as my poor Drusilla used to say, is better framed for forgetting than for remembering. And, indeed, considering that I am generally unable to recollect the proper titles of my own olive-branches, it is not to be wondered at if I call a foreign tree out of its name.” He sighed again, gloomily, and Fanny gave the arm on which her fingers rested an encouraging pressure. The coy manifestation had an instantaneous effect on Mr. Polwheal. He shifted the arm to Fanny’s waist, and as Fanny made no attempt to evade the chaste embrace, the stalwart yeoman blew a tremendous sigh. “This recalls associations,” he said, feelingly, “connected

Maids in a Market Garden

with days when I was not what I now am. If my Drusilla is at this moment observing us from the skies, her memory will be irresistibly carried back to the days of our courtship. Miss Dormer—Fanny—if I may call you so—dare I entertain the—the vision that your form will ever fill the place of hers who—who has—soared from the midst of her young family into a higher—a higher sphere? Will you be Mrs. Polwheal of Peniel, mistress of my house and mother to my children?”

“Oh, Mr. Polwheal!” Fanny gurgled.

“Joshua,” urged the wooer.

“Joshua. Can I be all that you expect of me? Will Thomas——”

“Thomas is the eldest!” said Mr. Polwheal, parenthetically.

“Ephraim——”

“Ephraim is the second,” nodded Mr. Polwheal.

“Janetta and Mary——”

“Janetta and Mary being twins, come third and fourth.”

“William, Jane, Oliver, Joshua, Harriet, Drusilla, Samuel, and George accept me as their mother’s successor?”

“I knew it,” said Mr. Polwheal, trium-

Maids in a Market Garden

phantly, "she has named all the twelve of 'em, consecutively, without a mistake. The whole of Cornwall—the United Kingdom hasn't her equal. And I'm a lucky—What's this?"

"Hush!" whispered Fanny, in awe-stricken accents.

For something was coming towards them, soundlessly and rapidly, over the damp carpet of leaves, something that showed white in the watery moonbeams, a human figure unmistakably, moving with a hobbling gait, bending under a burden.

Fanny opened her mouth to scream, but no sound came. She only clutched, desperately, the stout arm that supported her. But her mainstay was roughly withdrawn, as the undaunted farmer, brandishing his stout stick, hurled himself upon the *Lame Lady*.

* * * * *

There was a momentary scuffle, and a shrill squeal.

"Aw dear! aw deary me! he be a killing o' I! An' taters en awl, a free gift from Mester Pengwillian!"

* * * * *

Maids in a Market Garden

Fanny recognised the quavering septuagenarian accents. Fanny guessed that the mysterious marauder of orchard and garden, the blood-curdling hobbling apparition that had made havoc of poor Clara's peace were one and the same ; united in the venerable person of Dicky Daisy. She threw back her head and burst out with peal on peal of hysterical laughter. She thought of Octavia's solemn revelation ; of the Rector with his little black MS. copy of the Forms of Exorcism thoughtfully appointed by the ancient Fathers for the quieting of restless spooks, and she laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks. Later on, when Dicky Daisy and the sackful of *pièces de conviction* (French in this instance for parsnips, cauliflowers, onions and beets), had been delivered into the hands of Miller Job for safe detention until the morning, she laughed again.

" For," said Octavia, as the two sat down to supper, having bidden both priest and farmer farewell until the morrow, " it all happened so suddenly. Walking a considerable distance in advance of you, Mr. Carew and myself reached the orchard-

Maids in a Market Garden

hedge and turned back again upon the path. Lemuel—I mean the Rector—was bending over me, speaking in low earnest tones about the necessity of relying upon another arm than the arm of flesh”—Fanny spluttered —“when we saw—directly in front of us—it seemed to spring out of the earth, the ghostly emanation we had been prepared for. Lem—Mr. Carew—with striking calmness and self-possession, at once commenced to intone the exorcism, when, as I am sure might have happened to anyone, his memory unfortunately failed him in the middle of the first sentence, and he was obliged to continue with the Greek alphabet. Before, however, he had got as far as Upsilon, the apparition—which we now know to have been none at all, but simply the figure of a dishonest old villager in a white smock-frock, carrying a bagful of stolen vegetables—had vanished. The rest you know. In fact, the whole thing has ended ridiculously, as it was bound to do. Ghost indeed! I have half a mind to shake Clara for her stupidity. As if there could possibly be such a thing as a ghost!”

“What? in spite of the First Ritual, and

Maids in a Market Garden

the Ancient Rubrics, and the authority of the Venerable What's his-name? not to mention the Rev. Lemuel Carew?"

Octavia evaded making any reply.

XXXIII

It was pleasant to be at home again. Lady Jane and Marjory Dormer felt that, and Clara's bright eyes grew brighter as the wagonette which conveyed them from the station turned off the Pencarrick road, and the first bend in the steep descent showed the grey house perched on the valley side, against its background of sere orchard-trees, with the blue smoke ascending in a faint straight line above the pitch of its red-tiled roof-gables. Then there came the stoppage at the well-known gate, and presently the chilled wanderers were gathered in the long panelled parlour, where a great pile of apple logs blazed on the wide brick hearth, responding to Aunt 'Sanna's joyful exclamations, Joan's soft murmurs of welcome, and Octavia's warm greetings.

“ But where is Fanny ? Did you not see her at the station ? ”

Maid in a Market Garden

Octavia's question met with an all-round negative. Nobody had seen Fanny.

"She went over with the wagonette early this morning, with the avowed intention of doing a little shopping. Of course I expected that she would meet you, and return with you."

"Not a bone or feather of her did we set eyes on," cried Marjory. "The platform was perfectly vacant, except for a crying baby and a couple of yokels."

"Can she have lost her way?"

"Dear Lady Jane, who could possibly lose their way in a town the size of Pen-carrick?"

"Some accident, perhaps. Or Fanny might have met some friends. The boy who drove the wagonette may be able to give us a clue to her whereabouts."

The boy was interrogated, but his tardy replies threw but little light on the subject. He had driven the young lady into Pen-carrick that morning, had arrived there by a quarter to eleven, and deposited his fair burden by her special behest on the steps of the Town Hall.

"And driv away then, quick, an' wi'out luki' round," said Master Oliver Job, "an'

Maids in a Market Garden

pratty nigh smashed into Farmer Polwheal, as wer' whippin' sharp-like roun' th' cornder i' his new red-wheeled gig. An' him larfed an' throwed I half a crownd. En th' Registrar, Mr. Jobson, as wer' sittin' alongside of he—he larfed too."

"What could Farmer Polwheal want with the Registrar?" Octavia murmured, with eyes that dilated behind her spectacles.

"My dear Octavia, a thousand things," said Lady Jane. "He has a large family, for instance. Perhaps some juvenile ailment has ended fatally in the case of one of those children, who are continually running wild over the country side. Or—now I think of it—the Registrar's office is at the Town Hall. Mr. Polwheal may have simply given him a lift as far as his place of business. Or—I must beg, Octavia, that you will not look as if—as if you were seeing something dreadful. I will not say a ghost, because, though many of the most ancient Conservative families have their beliefs, well-founded beliefs, in respect of spiritual appearances, my own credulity has been sadly shocked by that scandalous affair, the particulars of which you detailed in your last letter. As

Maids in a Market Garden

for Dicky Buttercup, or whatever the old wretch calls himself, he should afford a moral example to the whole village, in connection with a pair of stocks and a whipping-post, if those good old feudal appliances were still in existence, and I were Squire Vosper of Trelawney."

"As it is, Mr. Polwheal has pensioned the old man and his wife on the condition that Dicky refrains from asserting his imaginary rights in the matter of the Killigarth cabbages and potatoes. It is certain that appropriation does not present itself to him in the light of dishonesty. 'Master Pengwillian' gave him permission to take as much as he liked, and we are, in his opinion, mere interlopers. By the way, have you heard from Rosevear? She has written to me, and returns to us to-morrow. For a short time, it may be. She is, for such an easy, light-hearted girl, a particularly warm and enthusiastic hater. And just now Fanny is void of favour in her eyes."

"It was an unpardonable trick. But," Lady Jane spoke with dignified conviction, "I believe—I absolutely believe—that in doing as she did, she meant well."

Maids in a Market Garden

"Perhaps she did. Let us hope that the breach between her and Rosevear will be patched up by degrees. She is extraordinarily late, by the way. Can anything have happened to her?"

Aunt Hosanna entered at this juncture. She carried on a japanned tray a small parcel wrapped in white paper, and an envelope, directed in Fanny's well-known and somewhat sprawly characters to the Limited Liability Company of Female Fruit and Flower Gardeners, Killigarth Farm.

"It is directed to all of us," said Octavia, fingering the missive doubtfully. "It seems to me—perhaps you will think me foolish—as though Fanny had had a piece of information to impart, of such a nature, that while it might be supported by the company collectively, one unsupported individual might sink under the shock."

"She can't have had an accident!" cried Marjory, with incredulous shrillness.

"If she has, it has not been attended with any fatal result," said Lady Jane, shrewdly, "or she would not have been able to write and tell us about it."

"It seems so funny; the idea of her writ-

Maids in a Market Garden

ing to the whole lot of us in that fashion," hazarded timid little Clara. "One would almost think Mr. Polwheal had inspired the idea. You remember his proposal?"

A sort of anticipatory chill coursed down the necks of all present as Lady Jane opened Fanny's missive, and read as follows :

"Dear Girls,—By the time you receive this, I shall be on my way to Paris——"

"To Paris!" chorused the L.L.C.F.F. F.G.

"—with Mr. Polwheal"—

"WITH MR. POLWHEAL!"—

"—to whom I was married this morning at the Registrar's Office, Pencarrick Town Hall. He was quite fatherly, if not more so, and we breakfasted with him after the ceremony. He had thoughtfully provided a cake. I send you the customary slice,"—it was in the white paper parcel tied up with satin ribbon.

"Her wedding cake! Well, of all the audacity!"—

"As to my connection with the Company, it may be severed or not, as you think proper; but I hope you will, all of you—except Rosevear, who, as she will never

Maids in a Market Garden

marry Mr. Vosper, will naturally never forgive me—keep a kind corner in your hearts for yours ever affectionately,

“ FANNY POLWHEAL.”

“ Fanny Polwheal ! ”

“ And there is a postscript—‘ Joshua sends his love.’ ”

“ Joshua ! Oh ! ”

“ And here is something written in the inside corner. ‘ Tell Marjory I have got there before her after all ! ’ What can that mean ? ”

“ Nothing,” asserted Marjory, with a curiously vivid blush. She hastily hid her left hand in her pocket as she spoke. Nobody had noticed that a new and handsome ring sparkled on the engagement finger.

Thus did Fanny strike the blow she had meditated from the beginning. Thus was Rosevear greeted, upon her return, with the news of her enemy’s voluntary secession from the ranks of the self-supporting, strong-minded sisterhood.

XXXIV

THE night of the Thursday following is a notable night in the annals of Porthporra Haven, by reason of the Great Storm.

The day itself dawned strangely, with a livid sun peering uncannily through a veil of dense white fog. Birds forgot to chirp, and huddled with head under wing in the gauze-veiled hedges, sheep and cattle stood with drooping heads turned northwards, though as yet there was only a faint, keen breeze blowing at intervals out of the shrouded south-west.

Towards noon it blew harder ; towards evening a perfect hurricane. In Porthporra all was bustle and excitement, and mingled with the hoarse roaring of the gale as it tore up the valley, the mumbling and growling of the furious sea, were shouts of men and shrieks of women. For the huge waves overleapt the Peak itself, crowning its

Maids in a Market Garden

jagged head in derision with a tangle of sea-weed and ruffled cordage from a wreck, and smothered the quays, in foam, and knocked the fishing boats together like so many cockle-shells. The tide went higher than any tide had done in twenty years. Salt water swamped the ground-floor of the houses in the main street, salt water drenched the faces of those who looked out from their windows half way up the cliff at the conflict between land and sea. And there seemed no prospect of things getting better—only worse.

The sailors and fishermen worked like heroes, hauling damaged boats out of reach of the furious billows, removing children and the household goods from swamped dwellings; bronzed, stern-lipped, resolute, they laboured on, knee-deep in rushing water and loose shingle, until late in the day. Most stern, most silent, most untiring of all, were the two Lenines, father and son.

Killigarth, nestled in its cup-like valley, knew little but that a fierce wind was blowing strong enough to shake even its granite walls. But the anxiety of Joan and Aunt Hosanna was manifest in their faces, and

Maids in a Market Garden

before long the state of things at the village had reached the ears of Lady Jane and the other members of the community. Some of the washed-out fishermen's families needed practical help, and it was not long before Lady Jane and her companions, laden with baskets of necessities, and accompanied by Joan, carrying a bundle of blankets, were on their way down the valley road.

Here they first became aware of the terrific force of the wind, as they struggled, breathless, with blinded eyes and fluttering draperies, upon their way. Signs of devastation became apparent on the very outskirts of the village. Men and women were going in and out of cottages, staggering under rolls of bedding and articles of household use and ornament. The main street was strewn with shingle and weed at every recurrent rush of the furious tide, and masses of masonry and fragments of boats were being dashed hither and thither in the yeasty turmoil nearer to the strand.

"There is Huey Lenine," shouted Marjory, with her lips close to Lady Jane's ear. "How grave he looks, and streaming with

Maids in a Market Garden

wet too. He must have been in the water."

"I should think so! Good heavens!" cried Lady Jane, as, with a resonant crash, a huge wave overleapt the Peak, broke upon its rugged summit, and streamed down its rocky sides in a thousand foaming waterfalls. "A little more of this and the entire haven will be demolished, every house a wreck, every boat splintered into matchwood. See, here comes another," as a fresh Titan from the wild world of waters beyond the rocky barrier launched itself upon the haven.

"Wid 'ee please, 'm?"

A small ragged girl was pulling at Marjory's gown.

"What is it, little one? Mother sent you? From the telegraph office. And this telegram is for me. Who can have sent it?" Marjory tore open the yellow envelope, and mastered its contents. Then she turned deadly pale and screamed.

"Philip! O Philip! Lady Jane—Octavia! My God, what will become of them?"

"Of whom?" cried Lady Jane, thor-

Maids in a Market Garden

oughly roused and alarmed. She snatched the paper that Marjory extended to her, and deciphered the following message :

“ Bevill, Plymouth.

“To Miss Marjory Dormer, Killigarth, near Porth-porra.

Vosper	and	self	mean	to
sail	yacht	over	this	morning
foggy	but	expect	will	clear
later	couldn't	wait	save	my
life	garden	gate	to-night	ever
faithful	Philip.”			

“ A very expensive telegram,” observed Lady Jane, soothingly. “ I had no idea you were on such intimate terms—I might say affectionate terms—with Mr. Philip Bevill.”

“ We are engaged,” cried Marjory, with blazing eyes and white cheeks.

Lady Jane relented.

Maids in a Market Garden

"There is no cause for alarm, I trust. I hope—I sincerely hope that Mr. Bevill and Mr. Vosper were wise enough not to attempt to start in the face of such weather. Indeed, how could they?"

"You forget, it was dead calm this morning, only for the fog," Marjory said, hoarsely. She looked and spoke unlike the careless, lazy Marjory they all knew so well. "And Philip is rash, terribly rash and headstrong, though he is a medical man." She burst into tears as she spoke. Clara tried to comfort her, and Lady Jane and Octavia turned to Rosevear for counsel in extremity.

But Rosevear had gone from them. With down-bent head, and every nerve of her lithe, active figure strained to resist and give battle to the onset of the furious gale, she was making her way up the steep cliff-path towards the whitewashed shelter, where the coastguard and his telescope had taken refuge.

"She will be blown over the cliff and killed to a dead certainty," groaned Lady Jane, with the calmness of desperation.

Little Clara Currey abandoned the weeping Marjory to Octavia's care. She touched

Maids in a Market Garden

Lady Jane lightly on the arm, saying "I will go after her and bring her back."

"For Heaven's sake," began the agonised lady, but Clara was already out of hearing. As the slight figure wavered in its first essay upon the dangerous path which Rosevear was steadily traversing in advance of her, a man's voice shouted warningly from below. In another moment a young fisherman in shaggy blue, with torn and dripping overalls, and yellow curls bare to the storm, ran lightly upwards and out upon the narrow shelving pathway where the two slight figures were struggling along in the teeth of wind and spray.

"Is everybody mad—or in love?" said Lady Jane, blankly.

XXXV

WITH the wild wind tearing at their garments and screaming in their ears, the salt spume lashing their smarting faces, the rack and riot of the combating elements around, above, and beneath, the girls reached the whitewashed stone refuge on the Coastguard Point in a state of breathless dishevelment, clinging each to a strong hand of Huey Lenine.

The coastguard removed his eye from his telescope, and drew that instrument out of its loophole, saluted the young ladies respectfully, and wrung out his dripping beard by way of making a complimentary toilet.

"Oh, Mr. Gerrian," Rosevear Trelawney cried, with her lips close to the sailor's ear, "do you see anything out there in the midst of all those fearful seas? Not a large vessel: a small yacht, schooner-rigged, like Mr. Bevill's. Indeed, it is the same, and

Maid in a Market Garden

you know her well. She has been anchored in Porthporra Haven for weeks together. And Mr. Bevill was foolish enough to sail from Plymouth this morning, with—with a friend. And if this storm has overtaken them——!”

“If it has, they are out of all danger by now, Miss,” the coastguard answered shortly; “safe and snug, cap'en, passenger, and crew, at the bottom of Davy Jones's locker.”

“God forbid!” cried Rosevear hastily, blanching through the red the wind had whipped into her fair cheeks.

“Look out there, Miss, for yourself,” said the sailor, “and judge whether anything of lighter tonnage than a full-sized Indiaman could live in such a sea. If start they did, and the gale overtook them, they never weathered Rame Head—and that's my candid opinion.”

He carefully wiped the telescope as he spoke, and adjusted it for Miss Trelawney. As her sight steadied, and her heart beat less furiously, she took her first peep into the middle of the raging Pandemonium, miles out to sea. She was in the heart of the storm, by the simple magic of the lenses,

Maids in a Market Garden

and the huge muddy waves were raging round her, while the shrieking tempest spurned them, and snatched away their caps of foam. And then a black spot came upon the field of vision, and presently she knew that it was a ship.

A three-masted ship, a sturdy merchant-man, on her way home from some foreign port to her owner's dock at Plymouth, and beaten far out of her course by the stress of wind and weather; like some living creature, struggling and straining in piteous case, with scarce a rag of sail upon her bending poles to maintain her own. Unless Fortune mightily favoured that good vessel, her end would be soon, her shrift a short one amongst the black crags and boiling cauldrons of the Devil's Den, or upon the jagged spur of the Lizard. And those who saw her distress from the land must perforce look on and do nothing; there was no getting help to her.

So, shuddering and sobbing, she scudded on, with her cargo of human hopes and fears, and Miss Trelawney saw her no more.

She lifted her head and looked round at

Maid in a Market Garden

her companions. Lenine and Clara were standing apart, not speaking. Clara's regard was bent on the beaten mud floor of the shelter, the gaze of the handsome, yellow-haired young giant was earnestly, timidly, eagerly fixed on her. And, with perceptions made unnaturally keen by the fever of her own heart, it may be, Rosevear read the meaning of the look and knew Lenine's secret at last. And, as the knowledge burst upon her, Clara's dark eyes were raised to meet those passionate blue ones.

* * * * *

Miss Trelawney started and caught her breath.

"By the Lord!" Mr. Gerrian, who had been busy at the spy-hole that looked eastwards, gave utterance to an exclamation that startled the others.

"What is't, captain?" cried Huey, eagerly.

"You can see as well wi' your naked eyes as me with th' glass, Huey, my son," Gerrian said, excitedly, surrendering his place to the young fisherman. "Look out there,

Maids in a Market Garden

a mile an' a half out to sea, in a line wi' th' Tarrand Church Rock. Eh ? ”

“ Yes,” said Huey, his bronzed face growing pale, “ ’tis ’em, sure enough. And God help ’em ! ”

“ Ay, God help ’em ! ” responded the coastguard, “ for man can do nowt. Must we break it to th’ ladies ? ”

“ Break what ? ” Rosevear said.

Then her eyes lightened, and she held out her hand imperiously for the glass. She adjusted it herself in the loophole—she looked—and a cry burst from her.

“ THE YACHT ! ”

“ Ay, ’tis th’ yacht,” responded Gerrian. There was a lull in the tempest, it was easier to speak and to hear. They looked on one another’s pale faces and strained their eyes towards that speck on the raging waters—how many minutes might pass before it vanished underneath them ?

“ Can nothing be done ? ” cried Rosevear. “ Think—think, for God’s sake, Mr. Tredennis—Huey Lenine, every minute is of value. Think quickly. Must we see Mr. Bevill and—and the other drowned before our eyes without lifting a hand to save them ? My

Maids in a Market Garden

God, my God—it is terrible! If you have any pity in either of you, think of something—do something!”

Her voice broke in a despairing wail. She leaned against the rough wall and clasped her hands upon her bosom to force back the choking sobs.

“There must be a way to save them,” said Clara, breathlessly, looking at Huey with eager shining eyes.

“Ther’ may be a way,” Lenine answered curtly. “M’appen ’tis but a bare chance for Mr. Vosper an’ his friend. M’appen ’tis death for some o’ them as tries it. But a chance there be.”

“You’re out o’ your mind, lad,” said Gerrian, roughly.

“Naw,” returned Huey. “Aw know what aw be talkin’ about. ’Tis trew no boat could get out o’ th’ haven in a whole skin wi’ such a sea, but from Tarrand Bay one might be got off, ’tis just possible. An’ if any can be found willin’ to go wi’ me——”

“Not one’ll risk it,” returned Gerrian. “’Em have wives an’ children, lad, to think on. Why should they throw away their lives for nowt?”

Maids in a Market Garden

"Then aw'll go by mysen," said Huey Lenine. He drew himself up to his full height, his blue eyes glinted like steel in the cold daylight. He touched his forelock to the ladies and turned to go. But Rose-vear caught his hand.

"You are a brave man. The bravest I ever met. God bless and keep you, Huey Lenine. And when you come back safe and sound, oh, if money can make you and your sweetheart happy, you shall have the half of everything I have got in the world. Go! Go! Why am I keeping you, when every minute means so much? Shake hands with Miss Clara. This is the bravest man in England to-day. Shake hands with him before he goes."

The little white hand was enfolded in the strong, coarse one for a second. Their eyes met, and lingered in a parting look. Then Huey was gone. Gone out of hearing of the cry that broke from lips he had never dared to touch, even in dreaming, at the bidding of Love, the Leveller of distinctions.

XXXVI

VOLUNTEERS were found, six hardy men and true, to follow the forlorn hope of Huey Lenine. His father, old 'Zekiel, a stern, grey giant, with eyes as blue and bright as Huey's, Oliver and Pennell, the handsome stalwart sons of Miller Job, Ned Carnelly, the village rake and ne'er-do-well, and two other fishermen, broad-chested, hirsute men of middle age. The wheels were taken from a cart, and urged by willing hands through the storm and stress of weather, the smaller of the two seine boats belonging to Porthporra fishery was run to Tarrand Bay. The sea swept in there with a force almost irresistible. Time upon time they essayed to launch the boat, but without success. At last, stout hands and willing hearts triumphed. They were gone into the raging hell out yonder. No glimpse was to be gained of the yacht, but Pennell's signal from Porthporra coast-

Maids in a Market Garden

guard point told the eager watchers on the rocky coast that she was still afloat.

So with sweat-drops standing on broad chests and knitted brows, with dripping garments and matted locks stiff with the sandy spume, the rescuers pursued their perilous way—until to the two drenched comrades, clinging to the rigging of the now fast sinking yacht, the knowledge that help was at hand, gave the cue for the wild hurrah! that echoed out from shore, as the human prey was snatched by human hands from the jaws of the old sea monster Death.

More waiting, and then the boat appeared, hurled from crest to crest of the terrific rollers. Nearer and nearer it drew, 'Zekiel Lenine standing in the stern, as lofty and immovable a figure as ever steered a Viking ship of old. And then, lifted bodily on an enormous sea, the boat was hurled to shore, and a hundred willing hands snatched the rescuers and the rescued into safety.

"Thank God," cried Rosevear, with a sob. Now that the strain was over she trembled in every limb. But in obedience to some irresistible impulse she went forward, and the throng that had gathered about Curnow

Maids in a Market Garden

Vosper and his companion opened, and made way for her.

He saw her. He stepped forwards. Their hands met. She wondered at her own rapture of thanksgiving that her enemy had been snatched from the sea. Marjory Dormer was already in her lover's arms, crying, hugging, and kissing the recovered object of her affections with a lack of restraint which jarred upon the delicate sensibilities of Lady Jane.

XXXVII

"WHERE is Huey Lenine? Let us thank Huey, to whom we owe everything," Rosevear said.

A murmur rose about her. She looked round, leaving her hand in Vosper's clasp. She met solemn glances and strange looks. She saw the ashy face of 'Zekiel Lenine. She heard the cry that broke from the old man.

"Out yonder—out i' the cruel sea. Ma son, ma son! The prop o' ma owd age, the joy o' ma life. Would God that aw had died for thee, ma son, ma son!"

Lady Jane, standing close beside Clara, heard her gasp, and felt the slight figure lapse heavily against her. It was Joan Melhuish who bent over the insensible girl and raised her in her arms. Her black hair fell down over the small white face that lay against her bosom. Her eyes were tragic, terrible, in their agony and despair. She turned them upon the wild sea, upon the threatening sky,

Maids in a Market Garden

now beginning to redden behind its bars of wrack. But she uttered no word. Only when her burden was taken from her, and the gathered throng moved to depart, falling by mute consent into processional order, bareheaded, behind the grief-stricken figure of the dead man's father, she spoke to Rosevear, and the women who tried to lead her away.

“ Thank ’ee all. M’appen ’tis kindly meant, but aw’m best left alone. ’Tis best that aw should wait here—for him. For him that gave his life to save other men’s, as his Master did before him. O women, women, you that ha’ whispered by your firesides o’ him and me, and crosses between us, and lover’s promises broken, ’ee may know the truth now. His heart went from me long ago, not by his will, or any other’s, but by the law o’ Love, that ebbs and flows wi’ the changes o’ the moon, like the sea. An’ he tould me th’ truth by ways more than words, an’ aw bid him take his freedom and go wheriver he would, wi’ th’ blessin’. For all, he was a true man—true as brave. An’ if th’ Angels o’ th’ dead can luke down from Heaven on them ’at loved ’em here below,

Maids in a Market Garden

his Angel sees ma, en aw that's i' my heart,
an' loves me as of owd, an' when aw that's
left o' him as was so dear comes to me,
watchin' by th' shore where we ha' met so
often, an' when aw takes him i' my arms to
kiss him for th' last time, before aw lays him
in th' grave where both may one day lie
together, 'twill be wi' no bitterness o' grief,
but wi' a spirit as quiet as th' woman's i'
th' Scripture when she poured th' precious
ointment on th' Feet that walked i' the ways
o' sorrow for all of us, an' wiped them in her
hair."

* * * * *

So they went away and left her waiting,
in obedience to her command. And when
the tempest ended and the seas went down,
she was still keeping vigil. And with the
next sunrise, That for which she had watched
and waited was brought to her, on the yeasty
surges of the incoming tide.

XXXVIII

CONCLUSION

LADY JANE PEGRAM stood at the window of the oak parlour at Killigarth, reading a letter. The balmy breath of spring floated in at the open casement, bearing to the spinster lady's nostrils a spring fragrance composed of the thousand odours of the wealthy orchard, the primrose-strewn fields, the violets and jonquils that bloomed in abundance on the warm sunny slopes of the flower garden, and the hawthorn blossoms of the hedges. The letter was in Marjory's handwriting, and dated from Truro, where, since their return from their honeymoon, Mr. and Mrs. Philip Bevill had quietly settled down.

"The practice was represented to us as a capital one," Marjory wrote, "and I believe it was, as Philip's predecessor had a contract for supplying cattle to the proprietors

Maids in a Market Garden

of the four-horse omnibuses, which in the tourist season continually run backwards and forwards between Truro and the neighbouring places of interest. He was a veterinary surgeon as well as a mender of human bones, and as he was in the habit of jobbing out such among his equine patients as were not actually what Philip calls *in articulo mortis*, accidents were frequent, and he has now been able to retire on a considerable fortune. And now, prepare yourself for a shock."

"Dear me!" ejaculated Lady Jane.

"The considerable amount owing the Limited Liability Company of Female Fruit and Flower Gardeners—that Company, which though deprived of several of its original promoters, still flourishes under your energetic and admirable management"—Lady Jane smiled proudly—"and will continue to do so, it is to be hoped for many years to come—will, I have reason to fear, remain unpaid. Under the disguise of Mr. Joshua Petherwick, the teetotal greengrocer of Integrity Mount, who for so many months has been kind enough to relieve the Killigarth Farm of the greater part of its garden

Maids in a Market Garden

and farm produce—under this counterfeit presentment exists no less a person than Rosevear's defaulting tenant, Mr. Pengwillian."

"I felt it in my bones," commented Lady Jane, with a vigorous nod, "from the very beginning."

The letter continued: "His ingenious excuses for not paying the value of the produce obtained from our Company, ought to have awakened our suspicions."

"Mine," Lady Jane said, "were awake from the first."

"The manner in which the fact of the wretch's identity was revealed to us, was simple in the extreme. Upon our intimating to him that proceedings would be instituted for the recovery of the money, he wrote Philip a letter—much adorned with Scriptural quotations—and signed with his real name. In it he asserted that having been deprived of his property by the unwomanly cupidity of Miss Trelawney—now Mrs. Curnow Vosper—he had taken the best means at hand of recompensing himself for the losses he had sustained! He sealed the letter with the door-key of his shop, and begged

Maids in a Market Garden

to assure us that although our continued enmity had driven him to the last resource of laying his aged bones in a foreign country, he would continue to intercede for our ultimate forgiveness and election at the hour of Family Worship. Nothing has yet been heard of him ! ”

“ Nor will be,” said Lady Jane. “ I should find it harder to endure the thought of those cauliflowers and things, if we were not really beginning to make a handsome profit out of Killigarth. But here is Fanny ! ”

Here was Fanny. Here, too, was Mr. Polwheal, even more florid, but not so bashful as of old, shaking hands with Lady Jane as though he had never invited her, with five other unattached spinsters, to become the mistress of his heart and home. The new house was in process of building ; the pony carriage, distantly alluded to by Mr. Polwheal, had developed into a mail phaeton and pair ; the obstreperous majority of the young Polwheals were safe at school ; the minor olive-branches were enthusiastically submissive to the rule of their new parent, who never confused William’s brimstone and treacle with Oliver’s chemical food, and

Maid in a Market Garden

always called them by the names conferred upon them at their christenings. Fanny was looking wonderfully well, though the dog-collar belt of the old days would have failed to encompass her charms. The last shadow of chagrin regarding Mr. Polwheal's supposed lack of ancestry had been completely wiped away by the fact, accidentally revealed by the simple Joshua, that a Polwheal had figured at the Battle of Hastings in the capacity of standard-bearer to the half-brother of the Conqueror, Robert of Mortain.

One morning, a few days later, saw Killigarth decorated as for a gala. Breakfast was laid in the long room, and a pleasant company sat round the table. Lady Jane and Fanny were superbly attired; Marjory dawned on all beholders in the most elegant of Parisian gowns and the divinest of bonnets. Mrs. Curnow Vosper, once the exiled Princess of Trelawney, now châtelaine of that fair manor by right of alliance with The Usurper, looked more beautiful than ever. Dress could make no difference to Rosevear, in other eyes than the adoring ones that so often rested on her. Octavia sat in the place

Maids in a Market Garden

of distinction, dressed, oh, kindly Heaven ! in a gown of white satin trimmed with costly lace. Orange-blossoms mingled themselves with the unwonted frivolities of her attire. Diamonds, the gift of her husband, the Reverend Lemuel Carew, sparkled at her throat, and on her finger the plain gold circlet, the badge of servitude to the iron-handed oppressor, showed to advantage as the bride blushing cut the cake, that indigestible symbol of commonplace domestic joys.

“ It is funny when one comes to think of it,” whispered Fanny to Lady Jane, “ that Octavia is the only one of us who was married in a wedding-dress. I think I do deserve some credit, really. Everything has come to pass just as I foretold it. And if I had not done as I did in the matter—you needn’t shake your head—Rosevear and Mr. Vosper would never have been brought together. She has forgiven me as I said she would. I am quite sure, that in her heart of hearts, she continually lauds, blesses, and glorifies the name of Fanny Polwheal. By the way, papa is coming home from India at last, as he says, to pass the remainder of his life

Maids in a Market Garden

amongst his dear ones. He is bringing home all that is left of his liver, a considerable amount of money, amassed in the discharge of his duty to his Government, and a step-mamma for Marjory and I. We are told that she is of dark complexion and wears a nose-ring, but rumour is so uncertain. It may be only a gold button, like that of the Brown-Gingall's ayah. Let us hope for the best. Papa is charmed to hear of Marjory's marriage and mine. He says he had almost given up all hope of ever getting us taken off his hands."

They are all talking together, they all are merry and hopeful. Yet sometimes a glance will stray to Clara's empty place at table. That she may soon fill it again is the heartfelt hope of all. The English spring is sweet, but too cold for the blossom that rude winter pinched so sharply. Clara is at Mentone, in the charge of the faithful nurse who tended her in the desperate illness that followed the day of the great storm ; who, little by little, raised her from the brink of the grave to which she seemed to be so surely sinking, and who has been throughout her tedious convalescence her comforter and friend. They

Maids in a Market Garden

will hardly sever, those two. They love each other more dearly for the love they bore another of whom they never speak.

* * * * *

Joan's voice may be the making of her fortune yet. A famous professor of music and teacher of ballad vocalists has heard her sing, has offered to undertake her training and arrange for her appearance on the stage of the concert-hall by and by. We may be sure that whatever laurels Fate may hold in store for Joan, she will wear them as she wears her beauty and her great grief, modestly and silently.

* * * * *

The health of the bride has been drunk, the Reverend Lemuel has responded, badly. Rosevear rises, and all eyes are turned to her. She speaks :

“To-day sees the partial dissolution of a band of women-workers who leagued themselves together to fight against ill-fortune, and wrest with their own hands their daily

Maids in a Market Garden

bread from the supreme Mother of all humanity. Success has crowned our efforts and will crown them in the future. We have essayed and proved that woman's enterprise, woman's co-operation, woman's effort need not necessarily result in failure.

"We have proved another thing, and that is that women can be good friends and trusty comrades to each other. Scarcely one jarring chord," Fanny giggled, "has marred the harmony of our life together. If any other of our sisters would follow our example, let them take, as we did, advice of the mediæval rhymster. 'The Songe of Goode Fellowship' needs but little adaptation to suit such a case. I have ventured," said Rosevear, modestly, "with all due respect to Matthew Merry-Greek, to alter a word here and there :

' A thing very fitte,
For maides that have witte,
Being companions litte,
All in one common house to bee ;
As fast fast for to sitte,
And not oft to flitte,
Nor varie a whitte,
But lovingly to agree.

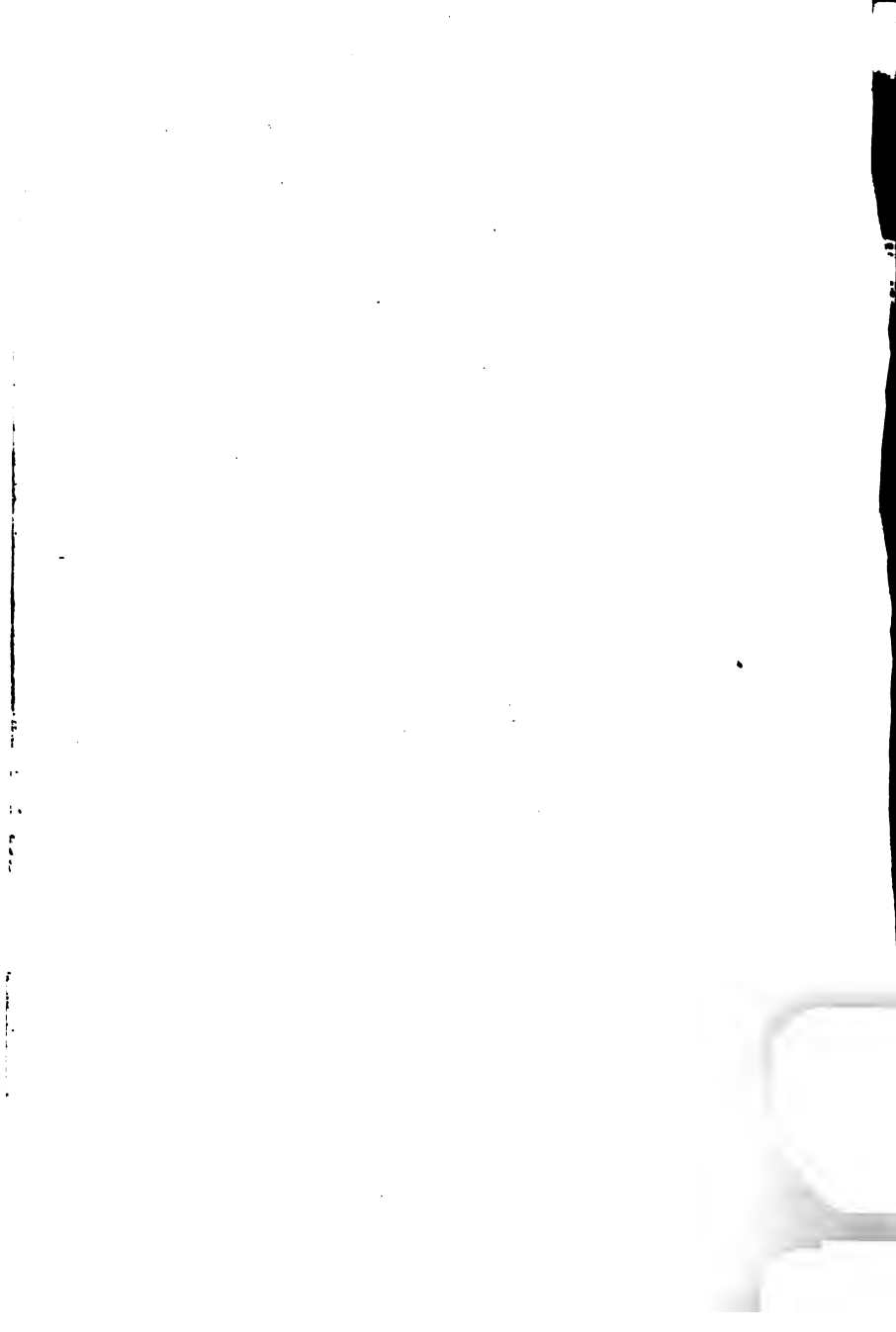
Maids in a Market Garden

Not one complayning,
Nor other disdayning,
For loss or for gayning,
But sisters and friends to bee ;
No grudge retayning,
No work refrayning,
Nor helpe restrayning,
But lovingly to agree.

No maid for despite,
By word or by write,
Her compeer to slight,
But partner in honestie ;
No good turns entwite,
Nor old wrong recite,
But let all goe quite.
And lovingly to agree.

And after drudgerie,
When they be werie,
Then to be merie,
As sisters and friends should be.
With chip and cherie,
High derie derie,
Trill on the berie,
And lovingly to agree ! ' "

THE END



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